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# Foreign Women in Latin Literature: The Representation of Boudicca

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Graduate Program in Classics  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts  
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**Foreign Women in Latin Literature:  
The Representation of Boudicca**

**(Thesis Format: Monograph)**  
by

Kaitlyn Pettigrew  
Department of Classical Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario

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## **Abstract**

The legacy of Boudicca is a compelling one. Since the rediscovery of the Tacitean manuscripts during the Renaissance, authors have grappled with how to reconcile the differences between the ancient accounts of Boudicca's rebellion. This issue has culminated in the tendency to either combine the sources to provide a coherent narrative or discredit and dismiss them. Either way the result is that the ancient sources do not receive the attention they deserve.

Tacitus' account of Boudicca's rebellion in the *Annals* provides the most sympathetic representation. Relevant Tacitean scholarship should be applied to the narrative to explain the discrepancies and oddities. Tacitus also provides the only narrative in which Boudicca is represented as a mother. An analysis of Boudicca as a mother shows that her motherhood affects the narrative at various levels and provides a critical commentary on the principate and the contemporaneous reign of Nero.

Key Words: Tacitus, Boudicca, Latin historiography, Roman history, ancient Rome, Roman Britain, motherhood

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## Chapter 1: Literature Review

*“For centuries [Boudica] has been a folk-heroine of British history,  
and this must be because she was a champion of freedom,  
a battler for the underdog, a righter of wrongs,  
qualities British people seek in their leaders, and indeed in themselves”  
- P.S. Fry<sup>1</sup>*

### ***Introduction***

Given the nature of this thesis it is difficult to provide a suitable introduction to the story of Boudicca.<sup>2</sup> Most introductions to scholarship on Boudicca begin with the conventional summary of her story: that she was a native British woman who led a rebellion against the Romans in AD 60/1<sup>3</sup> to avenge the atrocities committed against her family and people.<sup>4</sup> This conventional introduction is neat and tidy but it is also problematic. Only one of the ancient sources for the rebellion mentions specifically the outrages committed against Boudicca and her family and it is this discrepancy which

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<sup>1</sup> Fry (1982) vii.

<sup>2</sup> There is much scholarly contention over the spelling of Boudicca's name, with the prime candidates being Boudica, Boudicca, and Boadicea. The argument can be summarized effectively as successive mistransliterations. It is most commonly argued that Boudica is the correct version, stemming from a Celtic word, meaning 'victory' ('Victoria') [see Dudley and Webster 1962 and Jackson 1979] which was subsequently misspelled by Tacitus or the author of the manuscript with the extra 'c', which was further mistransliterated as 'Boadicea', having mistaken the 'u' for an 'a' and the second 'c' for an 'e'. There are multiple other spellings that cropped up over the years, ranging from Bundica to Voadica, but Furneaux (1907) maintains that Tacitus most definitely wrote 'Boudicca'. Whether or not this was an incorrect interpretation of the original Welsh name, because my study deals with Tacitus' account and his representation of the woman, I prefer to use Furneaux's spelling. My primary concern is not the historical reality, and thus 'Boudicca' will be used for most of my discussion. For a list of the variations in spelling see Williams (2009) 46.

<sup>3</sup> There is a debate over the date of the rebellion, which stems from the apparent telescoping of events in the sources. For the argument that the events narrated could not have occurred within one year, see Syme (1958) 391; Dudley (1968) 43; Orsi (1973) 531; and Carroll (1979). For the argument that 61 is the correct date, see Fabia (1893) 337; Braund (1996) 133; and Laederich (2001) 308.

<sup>4</sup> The rebellion occurred nearly twenty years after the Romans invaded Britain under the emperor Claudius in AD 43. For an overview of the invasion see Dudley and Webster (1973); Burnham and Johnson (1979); Webster (1980); and Frere and Fulford (2001). For the situation in Britain prior to the rebellion see Southern (2011).

forms the foundation of this thesis. Therefore, suffice it to say that Boudicca was a native British woman who led an ultimately unsuccessful rebellion against the Romans.

We derive our knowledge of Boudicca from three texts: Tacitus' *Agricola*,<sup>5</sup> Tacitus' *Annals*,<sup>6</sup> and Cassius Dio's *Roman History*.<sup>7</sup> The earliest account, the *Agricola*, which Tacitus probably completed around AD 98, was written more than thirty-five years after the rebellion and is the shortest account of the three. Tacitus provided a longer and more sympathetic account of the rebellion in the *Annals*, written around fifty-five years after the event.<sup>8</sup> Dio's account was written some one hundred and fifty years after the rebellion and presents the most savage image of Boudicca and the Britons.<sup>9</sup> The legacy of Boudicca is a compelling one and for various reasons throughout the history of Boudiccan scholarship, the three narratives have been separated from the works in which they were produced. Historically, the rebellion of Boudicca has been treated as an isolated event that can be reconstructed by stitching together the disparate narratives to create a unified whole, or by using other methods to discover the 'facts' that lie hidden but await discovery. The main focus of modern Boudiccan scholarship is to discover the

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<sup>5</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 14-16.

<sup>6</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.31-39.

<sup>7</sup> Dio. *Roman History* 62.1-12.

<sup>8</sup> The date for the composition of the *Annals* is somewhat uncertain but we know that Tacitus was well into writing in AD 116. See Mellor (2011) 20-21 and Benario (2012) 101-105.

<sup>9</sup> I discuss the Tacitean versions in more detail in Chapter Two. I am primarily concerned with Tacitus' representation of Boudicca in the *Annals* and thus Dio's version is outside the necessary limits of my thesis. However, some significant details should be kept in mind. He describes Boudicca as a woman with greater intelligence than often belongs to women and gives a lengthy description of her physical appearance, which still influences depictions of her today. The reasons given for the rebellion are financial rather than personal. Most importantly, Dio explains in detail the atrocities the Britons committed against the Roman colonists. In particular, they hung up naked the 'noblest and most distinguished women', and cut off their breasts and sewed them to their mouths to make it look as though the women were eating them. Afterwards the Britons impaled the women on stakes. Dio gives very little reason to sympathize with the rebels, and it is for this reason later British authors grappled with what to make of the Boudiccan rebellion, as I shall discuss below in the section titled *The Renaissance Legacy* (3).

‘real’ Boudicca, the woman behind the legend, through various ways, most of which diminish the importance of the ancient sources.<sup>10</sup> In order to give the Boudiccan rebellion some context, the trend has been to reconstruct the political and military atmosphere of Britain before and during Roman occupation, as well as to discuss what we know about women in Roman Britain. In the process, the ancient sources are typically relegated to a chapter between the three.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, however, scholarship on the individual authors cannot be applied to the narrative. Themes that are apparent only in their juxtaposition to other parts of the narrative are lost without their context. Discrepancies and oddities in the narratives are dismissed or explained away by other means.<sup>12</sup> It is necessary to situate the narratives back within their original texts to better explain what is happening in each. Thus the focus of this thesis is the representation of Boudicca in Tacitus’ *Annals*, the only account that states that Boudicca was a mother. Using a holistic approach I study the Boudiccan narrative within the context in the *Annals* and specifically the books that deal with the reign of Nero, when the revolt took place.

## ***I. Literature Review***

### *The Renaissance Legacy*

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Hingley and Unwin (2005); Aldhouse-Green (2006).

<sup>11</sup> For example, Hingley and Unwin (2005); Aldhouse-Green (2006); Dudley and Webster (1962).

<sup>12</sup> For example, in Overbeck (1969).



An interesting result of the ambiguity between sources is that it is part of what has made Boudicca so appealing to authors from the sixteenth century onward.<sup>13</sup> The different accounts, and especially the different descriptions of Boudicca, have offered authors the opportunity to pick and choose aspects to promote various political and moral agendas. Boudicca's image has been used in a variety of interesting ways, such as a precedent for the Protestant opposition to Roman Catholicism in England.<sup>14</sup> The English associated Roman imperialism with the pope and Catholicism, a significant threat to the desired hegemony of the British Empire at the time. English authors superimposed the oppression and tyranny of contemporary Rome onto ancient Roman imperialism. They considered early resistance movements as prognostic of the day when the Roman Empire would give way to the British Empire and therefore turned to the Roman sources for examples of civilized and noble ancestors who had taken a stand against Rome.<sup>15</sup> Disconcertingly, the English authors found a combination of admirable and condemnable examples. Some accounts presented them with an image of a people more similar to those the English had encountered in America.<sup>16</sup> The parallel the English drew between their ancestors and the Native Americans raised the issue of whether they should consider the Roman invasion of Britain as beneficial due to the civilization it brought to the barbarous native Britons.<sup>17</sup> This view, however, necessarily meant that the English authors had to accept a less than desirable origin and thus there exists a visible longing for a more respectable historical precedent in some of the English sources.<sup>18</sup> For example, as the

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<sup>13</sup> See Williams (2009) for an in-depth analysis of the reception of Boudicca.

<sup>14</sup> Williams (2009) 129.

<sup>15</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 113.

<sup>16</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 114.

<sup>17</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 114.

<sup>18</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 114.

British Empire expanded, authors began to depict Boudicca and the Britons as victorious.<sup>19</sup> The incongruent images of Boudicca from Tacitus and Dio presented early modern English writers with a particularly complicated issue. The violence and barbarity of the Britons as described by Dio disturbed the writers and seemed to confirm their fear of female rulers, which was particularly prevalent under the rule of the Queens Mary I (1553-1558) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the sympathy with which Tacitus represented Boudicca and the Britons in the *Annals* provided the opportunity to support female rule as well. It is for this reason that the myth that Boudicca was a queen of England emerged shortly after the death of Queen Elizabeth I.<sup>21</sup> Thus the ambiguity among Boudicca's sources has made her readily adaptable to a plethora of political situations.

The adaptability of Boudicca's image is particularly interesting because it is the element of motherhood that is either included or excluded. It is not surprising that as a strong, female figure, feminists have employed Boudicca to support sexual equality. The suffragists had banners to celebrate great women of all ages, including Boudicca, Joan of Arc, and Florence Nightingale. Even more interesting are the different ways in which the militant and constitutionalist suffragists used the image of Boudicca. During a Women's Social and Political Union meeting under Thornycroft's famous statue of Boadicea (as she is commonly known in Britain) on the Thames, Boadicea was seen as a symbol of the attitude of militant women.<sup>22</sup> Millicent Fawcett, leader of the constitutionalist National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, presented members of released prisoners of the

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<sup>19</sup> Williams (2009) 129.

<sup>20</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 115.

<sup>21</sup> MacDonald (1988) 48.

<sup>22</sup> MacDonald (1988) 55.

militant union with a redrawing of the statue, which presented a different image of Boudicca.<sup>23</sup> They replaced Boudicca's spear with a banner reading 'Votes for Women', put scales of justice in her other hand, and depicted an angel placing a laurel crown on Boudicca's head. In the borders of the drawing are two cameos. The one depicts a Madonna-like mother with her baby and the other depicts a mother and child reading a book. The suffragist movement provides an example of how groups with different agendas were able to use the same woman to represent very different ideas. Depending on the situation, English authors either focused on or ignored this aspect of Boudicca's representation.

More often the element of motherhood was what determined either a positive or negative reception. English authors have had difficulty reconciling the maternal figure from Tacitus with the savage figure who destroys the sexuality of women in Dio.<sup>24</sup> Where "proper" female qualities were used to admire Boudicca in Tacitus, in Dio they were used against her. Boudicca thus loses the problematic content of her gender, that is, her motherhood and the crimes against her as a woman, but she is just as problematic because she is so ruthless. The Italian courtier Petruccio Ubaldini had so much difficulty reconciling the images that he created two separate Boudiccas, one with the maternal aspects and one with the militaristic aspects.<sup>25</sup> During and after Queen Elizabeth's reign, in praising the virgin queen, authors ignored Boudicca's motherhood and her daughter's rape.<sup>26</sup> It seems that English authors were not able to conceive of a maternal figure who was also a strategic leader. Over time, however, male commentators stressed Boudicca

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<sup>23</sup> MacDonald (1988) 55.

<sup>24</sup> See n. 9 above.

<sup>25</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 122. Ubaldini had a lengthy career in England.

<sup>26</sup> MacDonald (1988) 48.

more frequently as a mother because for them it was the only way she could serve as an appropriate role model for British women.<sup>27</sup> As well, when presented with the ethical issues prompted by Dio's account of very cruel and savage Britons, rather than confront those issues authors chose to focus on the more sympathetic presentation in the *Annals*.<sup>28</sup>

The issues that the early modern English authors confronted when dealing with the incompatible representations of Boudicca have persisted into modern scholarship, although they are not as evident. The problems that modern scholars face in their scholarship on Boudicca also stem from the discrepancies between the sources and the difficulties that arise when attempting to reconcile them.

### *The Full-Length Studies*

While conducting the preliminary research for this thesis, I noticed very prominent patriotic overtones in much of Boudiccan scholarship. I began to make note of the nationality of each author that I came across, and of the eleven book-length studies of Boudicca in the past fifty years, ten were written by British authors.<sup>29</sup> This is something to keep in mind throughout the literature review because it could help to explain the desire to discover the 'real' Boudicca. I have organized the first part of the literature review chronologically, focusing only on these book-length studies for the moment. Thematically they all have much in common, but by reviewing them chronologically we can observe a subtle shift in thought, specifically regarding the ancient sources. In this

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<sup>27</sup> This point is noteworthy because the issue has continued into modern scholarship on Boudicca.

<sup>28</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 123; Williams (2009) 146-147.

<sup>29</sup> Dudley and Webster (1962); Webster (1978); Fry (1982); Fraser (1988); Sealey (1997); Hunt (2003); Hingley and Unwin (2005); Collingridge (2005); Aldhouse-Green (2006); and Williams (2009). The eleventh, Mikalachki (1998) was written by an American author and deals with the representation of Boudicca in plays.

section I provide a brief summary of each study to display the common trend in Boudiccan scholarship to reconstruct the historical event and what that means for this present study.

Dudley and Webster (1962) celebrated the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rebellion of Boudicca with a “full review of the present state of our knowledge” of the rebellion at that point in time.<sup>30</sup> In the introduction to the book they explained that Boudicca’s rebellion was the perfect opportunity for the coming together of ancient sources and archaeology to provide a full picture of the rebellion. Despite this purported intent, however, only one chapter of the book deals with the rebellion itself. The remainder of the book is dedicated to background information, which is provided to understand the events of the rebellion. With the emphasis on the political and military situation before the rebellion, the book reads more as an account of Roman Britain as a whole than a specialized study of Boudicca. The authors argue that the rebellion should be considered against the background of all Western provinces, and the Empire itself, as the rebellion was not an isolated event but part of an imperial framework.<sup>31</sup> For the most part they use the ancient sources uncritically, using all three to help present a unified description of the rebellion.

Little more than a decade later, Webster (1978) released a second book on Boudicca to take advantage of revelations from recent excavations at Colchester and London, which he argued would further elucidate details of the Boudiccan rebellion. The new information solidified movements of the armies but in terms of Boudicca herself

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<sup>30</sup> Dudley and Webster (1962) xi.

<sup>31</sup> It is interesting that this argument is made because of the contemporaneous focus on Roman Britain at the time. The authors expressed a certain, and valid, fear that, amidst a recent focus on the province, the book would be read as a patriotic treatise.

there was still not more than one chapter offered, which again appears late in the book. There is a longer summary of the state of Britain but, interestingly, the imperial framework is absent. Also notable is Webster's dismissal of Dio as a source, whereas he accepts Tacitus more readily.<sup>32</sup> He also freely makes speculations where he feels the archaeology and sources do not provide enough detail.<sup>33</sup>

Fraser (1988) provides something closer to the aim of this thesis. Using Boudicca as her focus, she studies the images of exceptional women throughout history, such as Zenobia, Catharine the Great, and Margaret Thatcher. Her clear emphasis is on powerful women and men's response to them. Fraser, too, uses the three sources when presenting her image of Boudicca and explaining how the Romans collectively viewed her. This inadvertently presents the idea that Roman ideals did not shift over the intervening years between Tacitus and Dio's accounts. It also does not take into account either of the authors' purposes in writing, but presents all Latin literature as representing the same ideas. It is also interesting that Fraser left out Joan of Arc because she leads but did not rule, and thus does not fit in her theme.<sup>34</sup> As we shall see in Chapter Three, Boudicca also does not rule and Tacitus very specifically avoids calling her a queen. Thus the argument that Boudicca ruled is based solely on Dio's account (who does explicitly call her a queen) but Fraser treats his account as simply more information than Tacitus chose to provide.

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<sup>32</sup> Most curiously concerning the speeches of Suetonius Paulinus. Webster (1978) 99-100 dismisses Dio's speech as mere rhetoric but claims Tacitus probably heard a second-hand version from Agricola, or someone else who had been present.

<sup>33</sup> Some of these, too, are interesting. For example, he guesses the direction of the wind when Paulinus is returning from Mona and Paulinus' thought process when he returned. For these projections and others see Webster (1978) 93.

<sup>34</sup> Fraser (1988) 8.

The study of Boudicca in Hingley and Unwin (2005) is the first indication that there is a shift away from using all three sources together. Hingley and Unwin openly advocate against using the three as parts to a whole. However, they are also primarily concerned with reconstructing the rebellion. They provide an excellent overview of each of the sources, pointing out the differences between them (I provide a similar overview in Chapter Two), but they still relegate their discussion of Tacitus and Dio to one chapter of the entire work. Hingley and Unwin also conclude that the discrepancies indicate we cannot trust our ancient sources, at which point they dismiss them entirely. The first half of the book is dedicated to reconstructing Iron Age Britain and the archaeological evidence for the rebellion, while the second half focuses on the transmission of Boudicca through history to modern culture.

Collingridge (2005) begins with the invasion of Claudius and constructs her account as a biography of Boudicca. She slips back into the trend of using all sources, drawing on Tacitus and Dio together to provide a uniform picture. Specifically, she presents the rape as though it is a fact. Collingridge shows how Boudicca became a legend in British culture, which is interesting, and no doubt important, but she allows the sources to, “speak for themselves”, and provides little analysis of each, choosing to accept them at face value for the sake of clarity.

One of the most tangible examples of patriotism appears in Aldhouse-Green (2006) whose focus in writing is Britain’s struggle for a cultural identity in the face of the “massive external threat” of Rome. She argues that there is evidence for an “alternative cultural identity” of the Iceni. Like Hingley and Unwin, Aldhouse-Green dismisses the ancient sources as unreliable, in this case because of their anti-foreign sentiments. She

claims that the archaeological information in the book will redress the balance. She is primarily concerned with finding the ‘real’ Boudicca as well, although she admits there is a possibility that Boudicca is entirely imaginary, created by an author to prove a point. Aldhouse-Green looks at the sources individually, but organizes them by theme, and thus the various elements of each author are spread out over multiple chapters. She intersperses the overview of each account with comments on the historical reality, the most interesting of which is the act of beating and what the Romans were attempting to achieve. While she admits that the act may not have taken place, the hypotheses are pure speculation.<sup>35</sup>

Williams (2009) provides a very thorough account of the evolution of the Boudicca story over time. The strength of this work lies in her discussion of the various ways in which the narrative has been manipulated throughout history. Her treatment is thematic, and so her discussion of the ancient sources is spread throughout the book. Williams makes some surprising comments on the sources as well, such as claiming, “Dio omits” the account of the beating and rape, which implies that Tacitus was right and Dio deliberately chose not to include it. While this is possible, it is equally possible that the situation was reversed.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, for some details she claims that it is clear Dio had access to archives that remained closed to Tacitus, which is also pure speculation as the details in either cannot be confirmed. Williams frequently speculates about other aspects as well, such as where Boudicca came from, and makes projections based on

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<sup>35</sup> It is also notable that Aldhouse-Green, like many others, assumes that Boudicca’s daughters are pre-pubescent. She argues that this would have added to the humiliation felt by the house of Prasutagus. There is no indication of age in Tacitus or Dio and yet the idea persists that her daughters were children. This is perhaps due to the popular imagery of Boudicca which frequently represents her daughters as young girls.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter Two (24).



information provided in Tacitus or Dio.<sup>37</sup> She also came to an interesting conclusion about the rape, which she suggests may have been invented by Boudicca as a means of gaining support and possibly explains Dio's omission of the detail. It is interesting that Williams is more skeptical of the woman represented than the author that represented her. If the detail is indeed invented, I would argue that it is more likely to have been invented by Tacitus to further the themes in his work, which I discuss in full in the following chapter.

Thus in the full-length studies of Boudicca, much of the focus has been placed on a reconstruction of the rebellion, looking beyond the ancient sources to find the impetus in the political and military atmosphere of Late Iron Age and early Imperial Britain. Earlier scholarship frequently combines the three sources to present a continuous narrative for the sake of clarity. This process necessarily presumes that the authors would have had the same motivation for writing about the rebellion, had access to the same sources, and had the same themes in mind in their treatment of Boudicca. More recent scholarship has recognized the problems with using all three, but has sometimes gone to the other extreme by dismissing the sources as unreliable due to the discrepancies between accounts or their pro-Roman sentiments. Although each of the titles indicate that the studies are going to be about *Boudicca*, typically very little of the overall works is about the representation of Boudicca herself. This is a void that needs to be filled. Boudicca's representation in the ancient sources is complex and therefore is deserving of focused study, particularly because these sources are the only window for the individual.

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<sup>37</sup> For example, that because we know Boudicca comes from the Celtic name Boudica we can infer which area of Britain she comes from, and if she was married to a king she must have been a member of an aristocratic family, and so on.

While archaeology can tell us about the rebellion it cannot provide details about Boudicca.

### *Scholarship with a Focus on the Sources*

There has been some notable scholarship on the ancient sources for Boudicca's rebellion. These studies have focused on the various aspects of Tacitus and Dio, such as language and style, but have still fallen prey to the desire to arrive at the historical reality. These sources are organized, not chronologically, but thematically, based on the focus of each study.

Du Toit (1977) analyzes Tacitus' treatment of the procurators in Britain, seeing a bias in the representation of Paulinus in Tacitus' *Annals* in comparison to that of the *Agricola*. This starting point resembles my own, that is, the attempt to explain the differences between the sources. However, in summarizing the rest of the rebellion, du Toit uses material from all of the sources. He claims that Tacitus' *Annals* are more credible than the *Agricola* based on the details and structure of the account. More significantly, he is largely focused on filling in information he sees as 'missing' from Tacitus and Dio and engages in projection. For example, in an attempt to explain why Prasutagus left his kingdom to his daughters,<sup>38</sup> he argues that the action was likely a "deliberate policy" designed to keep the kingdom from Boudicca, who probably would have formed an anti-Roman faction.<sup>39</sup> Prasutagus was therefore hoping to avoid any potential involvement of the Iceni in such a faction. Also presumptuous is his claim that Prasutagus hoped the Romans would see his daughters as potential wives for client-kings

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<sup>38</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.31. See Chapter Two for an overview of this part of the narrative.

<sup>39</sup> Du Toit (1977) 151.

who might be appointed to replace him.<sup>40</sup> This method of filling in the narrative is representative of much of Boudiccan scholarship. Rather than focusing on what Tacitus *did* say, scholars find themselves preoccupied with what he did *not* say. Du Toit does make an interesting observation, though, that Tacitus cleverly disassociates Paulinus from the less than honourable actions of the Roman army. We see a similar disassociation with Boudicca from the Britons in the *Annals*, which I discuss further in Chapter Three.

Overbeck (1969) engages in a similar type of historical reconstruction, although he focuses on the *Annals* and Dio's *Roman History*, and largely defends Tacitus against criticism from Theodor Mommsen.<sup>41</sup> It is particularly interesting that Overbeck argues against a comparison between the *Agricola* and the *Annals* because they are of disparate genres, but in the same breath holds that a comparison between the *Annals* and the *Roman History* is appropriate.<sup>42</sup> I would argue that a comparison cannot, and should not, be made between any of the three sources, especially given the differences between them.<sup>43</sup> Overbeck argues that of the two, Tacitus is more likely to be correct given his concise style and narrative that is "packed with hard facts", where Dio's account contains "remarkably little solid information".<sup>44</sup> He provides the comparison not to point out the discrepancies, but rather to dismiss them, in as much as he decides which is more likely

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<sup>40</sup> Du Toit (1977) 151. Du Toit attempts to fill in the narrative throughout, such as in his speculation concerning how the imperial government arrived at their decision whether or not to recall Paulinus after the rebellion (157).

<sup>41</sup> Overbeck (1969) 129. He defends Tacitus against Mommsen's claim (1887) 197 n.1 that, "A worse narrative than that of Tacitus concerning this war, *Annals* 14, 31-39, is hardly to be found even in this most unmilitary of all authors."

<sup>42</sup> Overbeck (1969) 130. This is problematic because it necessarily assumes that historiography had not changed in the intervening years between the two authors and that they would have had the same goals in mind in representing the rebellion. However, it is, perhaps, an appropriate comparison on the basis of genre.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>44</sup> Overbeck (1969) 130.

to be correct and accepts it without further question. For example, he contends that Tacitus' account of the final battle between Paulinus and Boudicca is more logical but that Dio's account is not, and therefore Tacitus' must be correct.<sup>45</sup> Despite his earlier warning that the *Agricola* and the *Annals* should not be compared, he dismisses the contradictions in them as Tacitus correcting the *Agricola* in the *Annals*, which for him is the "only logical conclusion".<sup>46</sup> He also claims that the differences between the accounts of the impetus for the rebellion are inconsequential because they do not contradict each other and the real motivations could very well have been a combination of the reasons given.<sup>47</sup> While this is true, it is not inconsequential if one author chose *not* to represent a part of the rebellion, and thus deserves analysis to determine *why* that author chose to do so. Finally, Overbeck passes over the literary devices in the speeches because they are of no historical interest.<sup>48</sup>

Santoro L'Hoir (1994) focuses on Tacitus' fixation with the stereotype of the *dux femina*. While it is not a study that focuses solely on Boudicca, Santoro L'Hoir does provide some interesting starting points for the present discussion. She provides an analysis of language to argue that Boudicca exemplifies the barbarian *dux femina* and serves to complement the imperial women of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>49</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that she maintains that we cannot determine if the representations

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<sup>45</sup> Overbeck (1969) 135. He also criticizes Dio for neglecting to provide information on the Roman order of battle.

<sup>46</sup> Overbeck (1969) 138.

<sup>47</sup> Overbeck (1969) 140. Although he does accuse Tacitus of "sloppiness" for not providing information on Catus Decianus, the procurator.

<sup>48</sup> Overbeck (1969) 136. In fact, speeches in Tacitus are highly indicative of character and should be analyzed thoroughly, even if they might not represent a historical reality. For speeches as literary devices, see Chapter Two. Cf. Adler (2011) 118-139.

<sup>49</sup> Santoro L'Hoir (1994) 7.

are historical fact, and focuses instead on information that Tacitus provides.<sup>50</sup> By situating the narrative within its larger context, Santoro L'Hoir argues for a negative representation of Boudicca that complements the negative representations of the imperial women. I agree that Boudicca's position in the text serves the larger end of Tacitus' representation of imperial women but she serves as a counterpoint to *some* of the imperial women and the Julio-Claudian dynasty, rather than a complement. Santoro L'Hoir takes a stereotype from Latin literature and attempts to apply it to all women in Tacitus, without analyzing the individual narratives in full. Her method necessarily assumes that all women who exercise power are the same, and are being represented in the same way, thus categorizing women into binary opposites.<sup>51</sup> She uses as evidence the presence of certain words that are commonly associated with negative representations but, as I will argue later, the context of these words are of vital importance to understanding their use in the narrative. More importantly, Santoro L'Hoir uses the language the *Agricola* employs in the representation of Boudicca to support her argument for a similar representation in the *Annals*, assuming that they present a continuous narrative in which Tacitus will always be negative.<sup>52</sup> Again, using one narrative to support the other does not take into account the differences of genre and we cannot safely assume that the representations serve the same purpose. Santoro L'Hoir picks out certain aspects of the narrative to support her argument, such as the fact that Boudicca "bullies" others into joining the rebellion.<sup>53</sup> However, in Chapter Three I argue that this feature actually ties Boudicca into a Roman literary tradition. She also argues that the presence of female

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<sup>50</sup> Santoro L'Hoir (1994) 5.

<sup>51</sup> In Chapter Three I explain why these binary opposites are illogical in light of Roman gender constructions.

<sup>52</sup> Santoro L'Hoir (1994) 9.

<sup>53</sup> Santoro L'Hoir (1994) 9. She cites Webster (1978) for this argument.

warriors taints the entire army with *muliebritas*<sup>54</sup> but as I mentioned above, Tacitus disassociates Boudicca from the rest of the army.

Roberts (1988) provides a laudable analysis of the assertion of *libertas* in the Boudicca narrative within the *Annals*. His treatment of the narrative, based entirely on its context in the *Annals*, provides the method upon which I have based this thesis. What is particularly useful is that Roberts separated the narrative from its greater context in the first half of his study to highlight how aspects can be misinterpreted when we view them in isolation.<sup>55</sup> By isolating the events in Britain, it reads as though Tacitus is criticizing the Britons, but when resituated in the context of Neronian affairs it becomes critical of Neronian Rome instead. By focusing on the theme of *libertas* Roberts argues that the Boudiccan revolt functions as an interlude to the domestic intrigues of Nero's reign and comments on the situation in Rome. Because of the placement of the narrative, Roberts maintains that it is necessary to view the entire account in light of Tacitus' discussion of Nero. Thus his evaluation of the Britons' reasons for rebellion appears more sympathetic, since they are standing up for their freedom from abusive rule. Roberts focuses primarily on the Britons as a whole, but it would be beneficial to focus on how Boudicca's representation in particular helps advance this theme. Roberts also mentions, almost in passing, that the Britons' failure to maintain the distinction between the public and private spaces indicates that the British troops are unrestrained, in contrast to the disciplined Roman soldiers. This also reflects a dominant theme in the *Annals*, which I will present more fully in Chapter Two.

Lastly, Braund (1996) examines the rulers of Roman Britain from Caesar to

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<sup>54</sup> A pejorative: effeminate, womanish, unmanly. See Chapter Three for the section on negative language.

<sup>55</sup> Roberts (1988) 119-127.

Agricola and claims to provide an intense and rigorous scrutiny of the literary evidence for Roman Britain.<sup>56</sup> His focus, therefore, is not Roman Britain but how the Romans perceived Britain and he draws his evidence primarily from Caesar and Tacitus. He studies the representations of Cartimandua<sup>57</sup> and Boudicca in the same chapter and argues that their representations were designed to reflect on the contemporaneous situation in Rome. Braund argues that Boudicca escapes the negative associations of queenship and that Tacitus' narrative does not encourage the reader to consider Boudicca a barbarian.<sup>58</sup> He draws the connection between the account of Boudicca's rebellion and a situation in Rome, described only a couple of chapters later in the *Annals*, in which the politician Pedanius Secundus was murdered by his slave.<sup>59</sup> Braund argues that Boudicca's rebellion comments on Tacitus' ideas of freedom, which I would agree with, except that he uses Tacitus' views on freedom in the *Agricola* to support his argument.<sup>60</sup> Braund also argues that because of the ultimate futility of the rebellion we are left wondering why it was presented at all.<sup>61</sup> He makes much of the fact that the rebellion did not achieve anything or make any substantial changes in the end. However, as I shall discuss in Chapter Three, in choosing Boudicca and her unsuccessful rebellion to transmit his message Tacitus is making a significant point. Braund ends his discussion with a cursory note that Boudicca

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<sup>56</sup> Braund (1996) 180.

<sup>57</sup> Queen of the Brigantes, another British tribe (Tac. *Hist.* 3.45, Tac. *Ann.* 12.40).

<sup>58</sup> Braund (1996) 132, 134.

<sup>59</sup> Braund (1996) 135. See Tac. *Ann.* 14.42-45 for the account of Pedanius Secundus. The Senate subsequently ordered the death of all 400 of Pedanius' slaves.

<sup>60</sup> Braund (1996) 138. Braund also argues that Tacitus indicates that it was slaves who committed the outrages against Boudicca and her daughters in *Ann.* 14.31. However, there is no logical connection between the two lines to support this argument. See Chapter Two, n. 84.

<sup>61</sup> Braund (1996) 139.

“retains substantial sympathy as an abused wife and mother”.<sup>62</sup> This is true but like others Braund does not elaborate on why this is the case.

### *Summary*

Previous scholarship on Boudicca reveals the tendency towards a desire to reconstruct the historical reality of both the rebellion and Boudicca herself. In this search for the ‘real’ Boudicca and ‘historical facts’, scholars frequently accept the ancient sources at face value or discredit and dismiss them. There is also a tendency to focus on the events leading up to the rebellion, to provide a fuller understanding of why the rebellion took place. This is necessary to present a unified, clear, and concise description of the rebellion and while I agree that a historical reconstruction is beneficial, this method does not take into account genre or stylistic qualities of the authors. Though there were certainly important events occurring in the political and military atmosphere in Britain leading up to the rebellion, the Roman authors presented specific, and seemingly simplified reasons in their texts. I argue that we should also pay attention to *how* the rebellion was represented and *why*. It seems essential to study the accounts as they appear in their narratives with particular attention paid to the author himself.

Recent scholarship has focused on the representations as they appear within the text, yet there is still a tendency to consider all three sources in unison as constituent parts of a whole. Some of these analyses involve projection, in which the author attempts to fill in what Tacitus or Dio does not say. This is also problematic because we start seeing details that the author may not have even known and we should not assume that he did. Scholars often think that it is possible to sift through the narrative and separate the facts

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<sup>62</sup> Braund (1996) 145.



from the invented and with the simple application of common sense these facts will be revealed.<sup>63</sup> As I will show throughout this thesis, however, the ‘invented’ aspects of the narrative permeate the surrounding narrative and affect the way in which the entire event is read. Although some scholars have noted that Boudicca’s representation as a mother is significant, they do not elaborate on why it is such a significant feature of the narrative.

### *Filling the Void*

There exists a passionate desire to read the characters that are ‘obscured’ by their representations in literature.<sup>64</sup> Marshall (1984) argues that however tempting it is to extract examples from texts, it is necessary to avoid excerpting references and pay attention to their context within the overall narrative.<sup>65</sup> We cannot take each reference to Boudicca out of its context and claim to understand her representation. The representations of women (and men) in any ancient source are strongly affected by the genre of the work in which they appear, which determines the details that are included and excluded and how the material is treated.<sup>66</sup> An appreciation of Boudicca’s role within the original narrative is essential to a proper understanding of the underlying significance of her presence in an event that helps comprise the author’s overriding interest.<sup>67</sup> The preoccupation with finding the facts<sup>68</sup> of the rebellion does not take into account just how often these characters and events served a greater purpose, which directly affected the

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<sup>63</sup> Joshel (1997) 226.

<sup>64</sup> Dixon (2001) 15.

<sup>65</sup> Marshall (1984) 170.

<sup>66</sup> Dixon (2001) 19.

<sup>67</sup> Marshall (1984) 184.

<sup>68</sup> For instance, troop numbers; Welsh norms; client-kingships etc. See esp. Williams (2009) 78. It should be noted that there is a debate over positivist historiography and literary historiography. See Wiseman (2007) and Lendon (2009) for two sides of this debate.

details included and the progression of the narrative. Ginsburg (2006) and Gruen (2006) argue that the representation of Agrippina the Younger was in many ways a literary construct, designed to serve the larger purposes of Tacitus' narrative.<sup>69</sup> They argued that we are not dealing with a 'real' person or an accurate depiction of her involvement in events but an artistic device that comments on her context. There is every reason to believe that Boudicca's representations serve a similar purpose.

Thus the methodology of this thesis is intratextual and I focus specifically on the representation of Boudicca in the *Annals*. I do, however, in Chapter Two compare the *Agricola* and the *Annals*, not to argue for one's credibility over the other or to find the 'facts', but simply to highlight the differences and how the themes in each work affect the progression of the narrative. I do not seek to present a study that is emblematic of all women in the *Annals*, or all foreign women in the *Annals*. I also am not calling into question the veracity of Tacitus or arguing that the rebellion is not a 'historical' event. This is primarily a study of *Boudicca* and the way in which Tacitus manipulated a historical event to complement his main themes. That Tacitus' Boudicca likely does not represent a reality does not render his account useless or undeserving of in-depth study. Certainly, using Tacitus as a source to reconstruct the rebellion is not helpful but that does not mean that we should entirely dismiss his account. The point of this thesis is neither to confirm nor deny details of the rebellion. I am concerned with *why* Tacitus has presented Boudicca in the way that he has and how the representation can help draw out his overarching themes.

In Chapter Two, I discuss Tacitus as a writer. It is necessary to apply Tacitean scholarship to the Boudicca narrative to draw out elements that lose their significance in

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<sup>69</sup> Ginsburg (2006) 9; Gruen (2006) 4-6, 8.

their separation from the works in which they were produced. I include scholarship that shows there is a precedent for my skepticism over using different works as parts to a whole. Instead of looking at why Boudicca was represented in the three sources, I look at why Tacitus chose to represent Boudicca in the way that he did. If there are inaccuracies or contradictions I seek to explain why Tacitus included them in his representation rather than dismiss them.

This involves a brief biography of Tacitus and an overview of the *Annals* and the *Agricola* to highlight some of the major differences. I discuss aspects of Tacitus as a writer, what we should expect when analyzing his narratives, and why it has been so easy to separate the Boudicca narrative from its context. I provide other notable examples of discrepancies to highlight the problems with such separation. These discrepancies are different in nature but all can be accounted for by the recurrent themes of the *Annals*. With these examples in mind, I argue that Boudicca was designed to comment upon Tacitus' greater themes. Simply put, Tacitus' *Annals* are primarily a study of the principate and its failings under the Julio-Claudians, and the two themes that Boudicca's representation complements are (i) freedom and the loss of Republican values, and (ii) the domestication of the imperial state.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how Boudicca's representation is able to comment on these themes. This involves a discussion of gender constructs in Rome and generalizations about women in Roman culture to show that it is through Boudicca's unique position as wife, widow, and mother that she is able to transmit these themes to the Roman audience. I examine the types of language used to describe Boudicca in the *Annals* and the juxtapositions with other women in the text. In the final two sections I

bring all of these elements together to show that motherhood affects the narrative at multiple levels, all designed to comment upon Tacitus' themes and convey a specific message to his Roman audience.

I will avoid making comparisons between Boudicca and other women or events from the remainder of the Tacitean corpus, largely because each work is of a slightly different genre and has a different overall theme. Since I argue that Tacitus often utilizes his characters to serve a larger purpose it seems inappropriate to draw from other works to support the *Annals*. Although, when presenting generalized information about literature (specifically in Chapter Three), I will provide examples from Tacitus' other works, as well as from other authors.

## Chapter 2: Tacitus, *The Annals*, and Boudicca

### *Introduction*

Gaius/Publius<sup>70</sup> Cornelius Tacitus was born in AD 56 or 57, possibly in Gallia Narbonensis (France) or Transpadane Italy. It is likely that he travelled to Rome for an education in rhetoric. Most of what we know about Tacitus is derived from statements by the author himself in his works.<sup>71</sup> In the *Agricola* we learn that Tacitus married the daughter of Gnaeus Julius Agricola in AD 77.<sup>72</sup> Tacitus lived through the reigns of the emperors Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, Nerva, Trajan, and possibly part of the reign of Hadrian. Tacitus tells us that his career moved forward under each of the Flavian emperors, especially under Domitian.<sup>73</sup> During his career, Tacitus completed five works: the *Agricola*, the *Germania*, the *Dialogue on Oratory*, the *Histories*, and the *Annals*. Each of his works is of a slightly different genre and as such Tacitus' authorial aims differ to an extent.

The problem with past scholarship on Boudicca is that scholars tend to separate the narrative from the work in which it was produced, the result of which is that we do not take into account Tacitus as an author or his authorial aims. There has been a considerable amount of Tacitean scholarship that could usefully be applied to the Boudicca narrative if only we were to reinsert the narrative back into the *Annals* where it was meant to be read within a larger work. The use of Tacitean scholarship by Boudicca scholars would help explain and assess the Boudicca narrative as a whole. In particular it

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<sup>70</sup> We are unsure of his *praenomen*.

<sup>71</sup> Dudley (1968) 13.

<sup>72</sup> For a more thorough account of Tacitus' life see Mendell (1957) 3-31; Syme (1958); Dudley (1968) 13-18; Martin (1981).

<sup>73</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.1.

will help to elucidate certain elements of the narrative, especially those that seem inventive or contradictory when placed alongside the narratives in the *Agricola* and Dio's *Roman History*. Various aspects of Tacitus' authorship, such as how he treats his subject matter, the composition of the *Annals*, and his use of dramatic elements, among others, all come to bear on the Boudicca narrative, but inevitably remain unacknowledged when we look at the rebellion as an isolated event that can be understood by combining all sources that mention it. In this chapter I will apply relevant Tacitean scholarship to the Boudicca narrative in order to draw out these elements, which I argue have been overlooked or insufficiently understood.

In section I, I provide an overview of the Tacitean versions of Boudicca's rebellion. A comparison between the two will show just how different his treatment in the *Annals* is, the reason for which some scholars have argued is a correction or an elaboration of his earlier version in the *Agricola*.<sup>74</sup> By analyzing the narratives in tandem it will become clear that this reason falls short of explaining the differences in detail and tone. Section II provides a discussion of Tacitus as an author and what we should expect when analyzing his narratives. I will apply existing scholarship on discrepancies between other narratives in Tacitus' works, as well as dramatic elements, as precedents for my argument that there is more to the discrepancy about Boudicca than a correction or expansion. I argue that these explanations do not take into account the differences of genre and theme of the two works. In section III, I discuss themes in the *Annals* that directly affect the Boudicca narrative. I argue that when we look at the narrative in light of these themes Boudicca's motherhood emerges as a trope designed to provide a commentary on the overall themes of the *Annals*.

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<sup>74</sup> See Overbeck (1969) and du Toit (1977).

## ***I. Overview of the Tacitean Narratives***

### *The Agricola*

The account of Boudicca's rebellion in the *Agricola* is relatively brief in comparison to the other accounts. Tacitus tells us that the Britons rose in rebellion under the leadership of Boudicca, who is only mentioned once, while the governor Suetonius Paulinus was absent. The account begins in chapter 14 where Tacitus discusses the succession of governors in Britain. In the end of the chapter he mentions that Suetonius was bolstered by previous successes and devised an attack on Mona in an attempt to bring the Celtic druids under control.<sup>75</sup> The Britons took advantage of his absence to rebel against what they consider an increasingly violent Roman presence. Tacitus immediately launches into his account of the rebellion in chapter 15:<sup>76</sup>

*Namque absentia legati remoto metu Britanni agitare inter se mala servitutis, conferre iniurias et interpretando accendere: nihil profici patientia nisi ut graviora tamquam ex facili tolerantibus imperentur. Singulos sibi olim reges fuisse, nunc binos imponi, e quibus legatus in sanguinem, procurator in bona saeviret. Aequae discordiam praepositorum, aequae concordiam subiectis exitiosam. Alterius manus centuriones, alterius servos vim et contumelias miscere. Nihil iam cupiditati, nihil libidini exceptum. In proelio fortiores esse qui spoliarent: nunc ab ignavis plerumque et imbellibus eripi domos, abstrahi liberos, iniungi dilectus, tamquam mori tantum pro patria nescientibus. Quantum enim transisse militum, si sese Britanni numerent? Sic Germanias excussisse iugum: et flumine, non Oceano defendi. Sibi patriam coniuges parentes, illis avaritiam et luxuriam causas belli esse. Recessuros, ut divus Iulius recessisset, modo virtutem maiorum suorum aemularentur. Neve proelii unius aut alterius eventu pavescerent: plus impetus felicibus, maiorem constantiam penes miseros esse. Iam Britannorum etiam deos misereri, qui Romanum ducem absentem, qui relegatum in alia insula exercitum detinerent; iam ipsos, quod difficillimum fuerit, deliberare. Porro in eius modi consiliis periculosius esse deprehendi quam audere.*

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<sup>75</sup>Tac. Agr. 14.

<sup>76</sup>Tac. Agr. 15. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

*For the Britons, having been removed from fear by the absence of the legate, stirred amongst themselves the evils of servitude, accumulating their injuries and inflaming them in the discussion: nothing is accomplished with patience except that heavier things are demanded from those who endure readily. At one time they had only one king for each nation, now two were set over them, a legate who vented his rage on their lives, a procurator who vented his rage on their property. Both the disagreement of the principal men and the harmony are destructive to their subjects. The centurions of the one, the slaves of the other mixed violence and abuse. Now nothing is excluded from their desire, nothing from their lust. In war it is the more powerful who plunders: now it is mostly by lazy and unwarlike people that their homes are snatched away, their children dragged away, conscription enforced, as if ignorant only how to die for their country. For how mere a handful of soldiers has crossed over, if the Britons counted themselves. Thus the Germans shook off the yoke: and yet they were defended by a river, not an ocean. For them, fatherland, wives, parents, were the causes of war, for the Romans greed and luxury. They will fall back, just as the divine Julius fell back, once they emulate the virtue of their ancestors. Do not be alarmed by the outcome of one or more battles: the miserable have more fruitful attacks, and are in possession of a greater perseverance. Now even the gods of the Britons feel pity, since they detained the absent Roman general, and since they detained the army, removed to another island: now they are deliberating, which will be the most difficult. In all such plans, to dare is less dangerous than to be caught.*

This long complaint comes from the mouths of the Britons as a whole. The motivation for the rebellion is given as the discontent with the legate and procurator, the former for his violence, the latter for his taxes. It is important to note that Tacitus claims they ‘inflamed’ their grievances, which gives the impression that their claims were exaggerated.<sup>77</sup> The speech appears as a stock complaint that authors frequently put into the mouths of barbarian enemies, with very little personalization of the situation.<sup>78</sup> At the very beginning of his description he has already suggested a negative take on the rebellion. He implies that, despite the long list of injustices that follows, the situation was not actually as bad as the Britons make it out to be. In this line Tacitus sets the tone for the rest of the narrative.

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<sup>77</sup> Tac. Agr. 15: “*interpretando accendere*”

<sup>78</sup> See Adler (2011) 118-139.



It is in the next chapter that we have the first reference to Boudicca:<sup>79</sup>

*His atque talibus in vicem instincti, Boudicca generis regii femina duce (neque enim sexum in imperiis discernunt) sumpsere universi bellum; ac sparsos per castella milites consecrati, expugnatis praesidiis ipsam coloniam invasere ut sedem servitutis, nec ullum in barbaris ingeniis saevitiae genus omisit ira et victoria. Quod nisi Paulinus cognito provinciae motu propere subvenisset, amissa Britannia foret; quam unius proelii fortuna veteri patientiae restituit, tenentibus arma plerisque, quos conscientia defectionis et proprius ex legato timor agitabat, ne quamquam egregius cetera adroganter in deditos et ut suae cuiusque iniuriae ultor durius consuleret.*

*Inspiring each other by this and like language, under the leadership of Boudicca, a woman of royal descent (for they do not separate sex in authority) they all undertook war; pursuing our soldiers who were scattered through the forts, storming the garrisons, they entered the colony itself as the seat of slavery, in their rage and victory they lay aside not any kind of cruelty of a barbarian. Had not Paulinus, knowing about the disturbance of the province quickly come to help, Britain would have been lost; by one fortunate battle he restored the old submission. Although there were many for whom knowledge of their failure and a particular fear of the legate stirred to keep their arms. Though exemplary in other respects, he took counsel arrogantly toward the conquered and with too much severity and as though avenging a personal injury.*

Tacitus provides very little detail in the only reference to Boudicca in this account.

Almost in passing Tacitus mentions she was the leader of the rebellion but this is the first and last time she appears in this narrative. He does not provide any details about her personal situation and does not elaborate on why she was chosen as their leader.<sup>80</sup>

Tacitus describes the Britons in negative terms such as *ira* (“rage”), *saevitia* (“cruelty”), and *barbara* (“barbarian”). Any sympathy that might have been elicited from the stock

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<sup>79</sup> Tac. Agr. 16.

<sup>80</sup> This version by Tacitus draws more attention to Boudicca’s royal lineage than the *Annals* but it is nevertheless noteworthy that he does not call her a queen; she is merely a woman of ‘kingly descent’. We are left unsure of why she has any authority. It is also notable that Tacitus uses the words “*femina duce*” and “*imperiis*” in his description. Because these words are closely tied to Roman ideas concerning gender, and to avoid repetition, the significance of these terms is discussed in Chapter Three.

complaint above is now forgotten in light of the revelation of their violence and cruelty. Tacitus makes no attempt to justify their actions; the account is straightforward and pointed. It is important to note that Tacitus implies all of the Britons rebelled and that they stormed military forts, two points that Tacitus will contradict in the *Annals*. It is interesting that there is clearly some negativity towards Suetonius Paulinus at the end, something that does not appear anywhere in the *Annals*.<sup>81</sup> The narrative of the rebellion ends with the transfer of power to Turpilianus and Tacitus continues the chapter with an overview of the subsequent governors. Thus the description of the rebellion in the *Agricola* is brief and Tacitus provides very little detail. In what he does say we can sense negative undertones to the text.

### *The Annals*

The description of the rebellion in the *Annals* is far more detailed and we are confronted with some noteworthy and disconcerting deviations from the account in the *Agricola*. Again, Tacitus begins with Suetonius' preoccupation with Mona, during which the Britons decide to rebel. Immediately, however, one of the most important differences between the two narratives becomes clear:<sup>82</sup>

*Rex Icenorum Prasutagus, longa opulentia clarus, Caesarem heredem duasque filias scripserat, tali obsequio ratus regnumque et domum suam procul iniuria fore. quod contra vertit, adeo ut regnum per centuriones, domus per servos velut capta vastarentur. iam primum uxor eius Boudicca verberibus adfecta et filiae stupro violatae sunt; praecipui quique Icenorum, quasi cunctam regionem muneri accepissent, avitis bonis exuuntur, et propinqui regis inter mancipia habebantur.*

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Du Toit (1977). In this work Tacitus is lauding *Agricola*, which might explain the more negative take on Paulinus' leadership before *Agricola* arrived.

<sup>82</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.31. Latin text taken from Oxford Classical Texts (1922).

*The king of the Iceni, Prasutagus, renowned for his great wealth, had written down Caesar as his heir and his two daughters, believing that by such compliance both his kingdom and his household would be far from injury. It turned out otherwise, so much so that his kingdom was ravaged by centurions, his house by slaves, as if they had been captured. In the beginning, his wife Boudicca was attacked with whips and his daughters were violated by rape; each of the principal men of the Iceni, as if they had received the entire region as a gift, were stripped of their ancestral property and the relatives of the king were held among possessions.*

Unlike in the *Agricola*, we now learn not only that the tribe's name is Iceni but also that the tribe had a king: Prasutagus. More significantly, that king was married to Boudicca and the two of them had daughters to whom Prasutagus attempted to leave his kingdom upon his death.<sup>83</sup> Thus in this version Tacitus presents us with a familial unit. In this first chapter of the rebellion we learn that Boudicca was a wife, widow, and mother.

Prasutagus had attempted to leave his kingdom to his daughters and Nero but the Romans explicitly violated that wish.<sup>84</sup> Tacitus presents us with a personalized and vivid representation of the complaints we heard from the Britons in the *Agricola*.

Compounding these personalized justifications, Tacitus then explains other motivations for the rebellion:<sup>85</sup>

*qua contumelia et metu graviorum, quando in formam provinciae cesserant, rapiunt arma, commotis ad rebellionem Trinovantibus et qui alii nondum servitio fracti resumere libertatem occultis coniurationibus*

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<sup>83</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 27. Hingley and Unwin explain that this was a Roman-style will, an act of deference towards the emperor by a client-king. They argue that the violation of this will would have shocked Tacitus' audience because Prasutagus' house had clearly been supportive of Rome, given their willingness to adopt Roman customs (in true client-king form). Tacitus was aiming for shock value when he had the Roman soldiers harm a friendly aristocratic family. For the confiscation of property and client-kingship relations see Braund (1983), esp. 43-44.

<sup>84</sup> Braund (1996) argues that Tacitus indicates that slaves committed the atrocities against Boudicca and her daughters. However, there is no continuation in the line of thought between sentences. In order for such a connection to be made we would expect to see a different construction than *iam primum*, to indicate a continuation. Together with the lines following, the outrages suffered by Boudicca and her daughters appear as a part of a list of grievances, with no indication that any were committed by either the centurions or slaves.

<sup>85</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.31.

*pepigerant, acerrimo in veteranos odio. quippe in coloniam Camulodunum recens deducti pellebant domibus, exturbabant agris, captivos, servos appellando, fiventibus impotentiam veteranorum militibus similitudine vitae et spe eiusdem licentiae. ad hoc templum divo Claudio constitutum quasi arx aeternae dominationibus adspiciebatur, delectique sacerdotes specie religionis omnes fortunas effundebant. nec arduum videbatur excindere coloniam nullis munimentis saeptam; quod ducibus nostris parum provisum erat, dum amoenitati prius quam usui consulitur.*

*Because of this insult and in fear of worse, since they had conceded to the form of a province, they seized arms, stirring to rebellion the Trinovantes and others who not yet broken by servitude, agreed in secret plots to take back their freedom, with the fiercest hatred toward the veterans. Indeed, having recently been led to the colony of Camulodunum they drove [people] from their homes, they drove them out of their estates, calling them captives and slaves, the lawlessness of the veterans being encouraged by the soldiers because of their similar lifestyle and the hope of the same license. As well the temple set up to the Divine Claudius appeared as a citadel of eternal tyranny, and the chosen priests were pouring away whole fortunes in a show of religion. It did not appear a difficult matter to destroy the colony, which was not fenced in by fortifications, and for which our leaders had made too little provision while they took care for pleasantness more than expedience.*

The first line of this section is reminiscent of the *Agricola*, except in this case Tacitus does not imply that the injustices were exaggerated. Whereas in the *Agricola* the complaints come through the mouths of the Britons, in the *Annals* they are from Tacitus himself. Instead Tacitus presents a damning picture of the Roman veterans and soldiers in the province, thereby suggesting that the Britons' complaints are reasonable. He also specifies that it was the Iceni and Trinovantes along with some others who rose in rebellion, thus minimizing the scale that he presented in the *Agricola*, in which he implied the entire province rebelled. Tacitus also criticizes the Roman generals for their negligence in preparing the fortifications of the colony.

Tacitus then describes omens that helped incite the tribes to rebellion. These omens frightened the veterans who, in the absence of Suetonius, requested help from the procurator Catus Decianus:<sup>86</sup>

*...ille haud amplius quam ducentos sine iustis armis misit; et inerat modica militum manus. tutela templi freti, et impredientibus qui occulti rebellionis conscii consilia turbabant, neque fossam aut vallum praeduxerunt, neque motis senibus et feminis iuventus sola restitit: quasi media pace incauti multitudine barbarorum circumveniuntur. et cetera quidem impetu direpta aut incensa sunt: templum, in quo se miles conglobaverat, biduo obsessum expugnatumque. et victor Britannus, Petilio Ceriali, legato legionis nonae, in subsidium adventanti obuius, fudit legionem, et quod peditum interfecit: Cerialis cum equitibus evasit in castra et munimentis defensus est. qua clade et odiis provinciae, quam avaritia eius in bellum egerat, trepidus procurator Catus in Galliam transiit.*

*...He sent no more than two hundred men without their regular arms; and inside there was only a modest military force. Relying on the protection of the temple, and hindered by secret accomplices in the rebellion who disrupted their plans, they constructed neither a trench nor rampart, and not having removed the elderly or the women, the youth alone resisted. Incautious as if in the middle of peace they were surrounded by a multitude of barbarians. The rest was plundered or burned in the attacks: the temple, in which the soldiers themselves had gathered, was besieged for two days and was captured. And the victorious Britons met Petilio Cerialis, legate of the Ninth Legion, as he was coming to the rescue, and routed the legion, and destroyed his infantry. Cerialis escaped with the cavalry to the camp and defended the fortifications. Alarmed at the disaster and the hatred of the province, which his greed had driven to war, the procurator Catus crossed over into Gaul.*

Tacitus indicts the Romans by explaining how unprepared they were for an attack. Decianus did not send enough aid, the Romans were misled by accomplices of the rebellion, had not built fortifications, had not evacuated the women or the elderly, and let themselves be surprised by the enemy. Tacitus further condemns Decianus for fleeing and explicitly states that the rebellion was in part caused by his excessive greed, another

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<sup>86</sup> Tac. Ann. 14.32

personalization of a complaint in the *Agricola*.<sup>87</sup> The Britons are again described as ‘barbarians’ but this negative term is overshadowed by Tacitus’ condemnation of Decianus’ negligence and rapacity. In contrast to the *Agricola*, Tacitus provides ample justification for the rebellion.

Finally Suetonius returns from Mona while the Britons continue to attack Roman settlements. It is here that Tacitus provides the first hints of negativity towards the Britons:<sup>88</sup>

*...si quos imbellis sexus aut fessa aetas vel loci dulcedo attinuerat, ab hoste oppressi sunt. eadem clades municipio Verulamio fuit, quia barbari omissis castellis praesidiisque militarium, quod uberrimum spolianti et defendentibus intutum, laeti praeda et laborum segnes petebant. ad septuaginta milia civium et sociorum iis, quae memoravi, locis cecidisse constitit. neque enim capere aut venundare aliudve quod belli commercium, sed caedes patibula, ignes cruces, tamquam reddituri supplicium, at praerepta interim ultione, festinabant.*

*...Those who were detained by their unwarlike sex or the fatigue of age, or the sweetness of the place, were overwhelmed by the enemy. There was similar ruin for the town of Verulamium, because the barbarians passed by the military forts and defenses of the military, since they were delighted by plunder and sluggish for labour, they sought out the areas most fruitful for a despoiler and unguarded by defenders. It has been agreed that about seventy thousand citizens and allies fell in the places which I have mentioned. For there was neither capturing nor selling or any other feature of the trade of war but they hastened their slaughter, scaffolds, fires, and crosses, as though about to return to supplication, but in the meantime preempting revenge.*

Tacitus portrays the Britons in a negative light by relating this scene in which they are searching for the easiest ways to acquire wealth. It is notable that during this scene Boudicca is absent from the narrative, which is Tacitus’ attempt at disassociating her from the barbarians.<sup>89</sup> Here we have the second contradiction of the *Agricola*, where

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<sup>87</sup> In the *Agricola* the Britons complain that a procurator was tyrannizing their property.

<sup>88</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.33.

<sup>89</sup> I discuss this absence in more detail in Chapter Three.

Tacitus says that the enemy stormed military forts; here he explicitly states that the Britons bypassed military forts in search of wealth. Tacitus also makes a point of representing the Romans as superior in war. The Romans may be guilty of injustices, but they are still superior to the enemy.<sup>90</sup>

Lastly, Tacitus recounts the final battle between Suetonius and his forces and Boudicca and hers. Tacitus emphasizes the differences between their behaviour in war here as well; where Suetonius is orderly and strategic the Britons are disorderly and lack discipline. They also showed arrogance by bringing their wives to witness what they thought would be a certain victory.<sup>91</sup> This does not diminish the sympathy that Tacitus has thus far elicited from the audience because he gives Boudicca a rousing speech to her troops before the battle.<sup>92</sup>

*Boudicca curru filias prae se vehens, ut quamque nationem accesserat, solitum quidem Britannis feminarum ductu bellare testabatur, sed tunc non ut tantis maioribus ortam regnum et opes, verum ut unam e vulgo libertatem amissam, confectum verberibus corpus, contrectatam filiarum pudicitiam ulcisci. eo provectas Romanorum cupidines, ut non corpora, ne senectam quidem aut virginitatem impollutam relinquunt. adesse tamen deos iustae vindictae; cecidisse legionem, quae proelium ausa sit; ceteros castris occultari aut fugam circumspicere. ne strepitum quidem clamorem tot milium, nedum impetus et manus perlaturus. si copias armatorum, si causas belli secum expenderent, vincendum illa acie vel cadendum esse. id mulieri destinatum: viverent viri et servirent.*

*Boudicca, carrying her daughters before her in a chariot, as she approached each tribe, testified that it was indeed customary for the Britons to fight under the leadership of women, but now she was not as one descended from noble ancestry avenging a kingdom and wealth, but as one of the people, avenging her lost freedom, her body attacked with whips, the abused chastity of her daughters. The lusts of the Romans had advanced so far that they left no bodies nor even old age or virginity unpolluted.*

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<sup>90</sup> Adler (2011) 126 argues that Tacitus would never go so far as to leave his audience thinking the enemy was superior to Rome. Tacitus sympathizes with the rebels but does not think them superior to Rome.

<sup>91</sup> Tac. Ann. 14.34

<sup>92</sup> Tac. Ann. 14.35

*Nevertheless the gods were assisting their justified vengeance; the legion which had dared battle had fallen; the rest were concealing themselves in their camp or looking around for flight. They would not even bear the noise and shouting of so many thousands, much less their assault and blows. If they weighted within themselves the supply of armed men and the reasons for war they must conquer in that battle line or die. This was the resolve of a woman: the men may live and be slaves.*

Before analyzing this chapter, it is necessary to consider the purpose of speeches in Tacitus. Tacitus' speeches often provide a more detailed picture of the character that is speaking and also clarify a historical event that Tacitus represents.<sup>93</sup> Boudicca's exhortation appears in *oratio obliqua*,<sup>94</sup> which allows Tacitus to ventriloquize Boudicca and insert himself into the text.<sup>95</sup> This speech highlights Roman misadministration and abuse of power and is indicative of Tacitus' perception and standpoint on the rebellion. We should therefore pay particular attention to the elements of Boudicca's speech and Suetonius' response to it below.

Boudicca's speech recalls the words of the Britons in the *Agricola* in that she addresses Roman cupidity and the loss of freedom. Yet again, however, there is no hint that these outrages are exaggerated. Tacitus has represented the injustices of which she speaks as very real motives for rebellion. It is in this chapter that Tacitus most explicitly advances his motifs, upon which I will elaborate in the next section. For now it is important to note that, although Boudicca points out that the Britons did allow female leadership, Tacitus has her explicitly state that she is not going to war as a queen nor is she attempting to recover the kingdom for herself. The word *cupido* appears but it is attributed to the Romans, not Boudicca. Boudicca is not ambitious, she does not lust for

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<sup>93</sup> Adler (2011) 117. See also Ullmann (1927) 246; Syme (1958) 701-703; Miller (1964) 2-5.

<sup>94</sup> Indirect discourse. See Miller (1964).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Pagán (2000) 361. She argues that Tacitus used indirect discourse for Arminius to promote his own idea of freedom in Tac. *Ann.* 2.15.



power, and she is not cruel. It is also significant that Boudicca's daughters are present because they serve as physical reminders of the injustices committed against the Britons by the Romans.<sup>96</sup>

Immediately after, Suetonius makes his speech to the Roman troops:<sup>97</sup>

*Ne Suetonius quidem in tanto discrimine silebat. quamquam confideret virtuti, tamen exhortationes et preces miscebat, ut spernerent sonores barbarorum et inanes minas: plus illic feminarum quam iuventutis adspici. imbellis inermis cessuros statim, ubi ferrum virtutemque vincentium totiens fusi agnovissent. etiam in multis legionibus paucos, qui proelia profligarent; gloriaque eorum accessurum, quod modica manus universi exercitus famam adipiscerentur. conferti tantum et pilis emissis post umbonibus et gladiis stragem caedemque continuarent, praedae immemores: parva victoria cuncta ipsis cessura. is ardor verba ducis sequebatur, ita se ad intorquenda pila expedierat vetus miles et multa proeliorum experientia, ut certus eventus Suetonius daret pugnae signum.*

*Indeed nor was Suetonius silent at such a crisis. Although he had confidence in their courage, nevertheless he mixed encouragements and entreaties that they should disdain the sounds of the barbarians and the empty threats: more women than young men were observable there. Unwarlike, unarmed, they would yield immediately when they recognized the sword and courage of their conquerors, having been routed so many times already. Even among many legions it is a few who decide the battle, and it would enhance their glory, that a modest force should acquire the fame of an entire army. Pressed close together and with their javelins discharged, afterward they must only continue the destruction and slaughter with shield-bosses and swords, forgetful of plunder: with victory gained everything would yield to them. Such was the enthusiasm which followed the words of the leader and so prompt did the veteran soldiers, with their long experience in battle, prepare for the hurling of javelins, that, certain of the outcome, Suetonius gave the signal for battle.*

His speech is far less rousing; Tacitus instead makes Suetonius' speech tactical in nature.

In no way does he mention any reasons or justifications for the Romans. It appears that

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<sup>96</sup> I elaborate on this in Chapter Three in a section devoted to rape and *libertas*. It is also notable that Tacitus has her include the line that it was normal for the Britons to fight under female leadership. This very inclusion is a reason to doubt the historicity of the account. If it were indeed usual then there would be no reason for Boudicca to address it; this comment is clearly aimed at enlightening a Roman audience.

<sup>97</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.36.

the Britons were set up in contrast to the Romans in 14.33 with their distracting love of plunder compared to this speech in which Suetonius advises the Romans not to think about plunder until after they have won. However, the fact that Suetonius mentions plunder confirms the Britons' complaint that the Romans have no respect for the conquered. It is significant that there is no defense of Roman imperialism, especially considering that his speech echoes other parts of Boudicca's speech, implying that Tacitus is aiming for the opposite effect, in that he is actually criticizing imperialism.<sup>98</sup>

Then follows a short description of the battle itself in which the Romans easily break the Britons. The Romans do not spare any of the women and Boudicca is said to have poisoned herself. Tacitus then moves on to different events in Britain. It seems to be an abrupt ending of a very detailed narrative, but Boudicca's death marks the end to his symbolic juxtaposition to other events in the *Annals* and there is no reason for further elaboration.

There is clearly far more detail in the *Annals* but the details that Tacitus provides are not corrections nor does it seem likely that it is an expansion of the account in the *Agricola*. Tacitus provides an entirely new cause of the rebellion along with the old version that there were financial issues. Had Cassius Dio mentioned the same reasons listed in the *Annals* about a century later the expansion argument would have a lot more merit.<sup>99</sup> The fact that he does not mention Boudicca's family at all is telling. There is also the issue that Tacitus is more sympathetic in one account than the other. In the *Annals* he respected the Britons' reasons for rebellion whereas in the *Agricola* he denounced their reasons as little less than exaggerations, which, when added to the rest of the narrative,

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<sup>98</sup> Adler (2011) 128-129.

<sup>99</sup> Cassius Dio, *Rom. Hist.* 62.

increases the negativity of the larger picture.<sup>100</sup> It is also interesting that in the *Annals* Tacitus does not mention the issues he had with Suetonius in the *Agricola*. The correction or expansion argument does not explain why Tacitus would have left out this detail.<sup>101</sup> Thus the details that he has added are aimed at eliciting sympathy from his audience and cannot be dismissed as corrections or expansions. This explanation, however, does not indicate *why* Tacitus chose to elicit sympathy in one or the other and this is the first instance where turning to Tacitean scholarship proves beneficial in elucidating the oddities of Tacitus' accounts of the rebellion. It is necessary to look briefly at some aspects of Tacitus as a writer to understand these discrepancies and why they are more likely to stem from a difference in genre than correcting an earlier account.

## ***II. Tacitus as a Writer: What We Should Expect***

When analyzing the Boudicca narrative it is essential to understand how Tacitus treats his subject matter and how he uses his material within the greater works.

Scholarship on Boudicca has been focused on revealing the facts that are present in the narrative, but as Walker points out, a lot of information in Tacitus is not fact, nor does Tacitus present it as such.<sup>102</sup> Due to the episodic nature of Tacitus' *Annals*, it is very easy

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<sup>100</sup> Adler (2011) 122.

<sup>101</sup> See du Toit (1977), in which he analyzes the differing accounts of Suetonius in the *Annals* and the *Agricola*. He concludes that he is not sure why Tacitus is so favourable towards Suetonius in the *Annals*. It is interesting that du Toit states that Tacitus was more "accurate" in the *Annals* than the *Agricola*, and even more interesting that he claims Cassius Dio's version was the most accurate of all three. He argues that Dio's sources seem good (though he does not explain who/what these sources were, other than mentioning that Dio's reference to British queens wearing a torque has been confirmed by archaeological records) and that his account is "less dramatic" than Tacitus'.

<sup>102</sup> Walker (1960) 3. This is not to say that I do not believe the Boudiccan rebellion occurred, or that Boudicca is not a historical person, but that there are likely elements in the narrative that were not intended to be passed along as 'facts'.

to extract various accounts from the text as standalone narratives, but it is important to remember that the *Annals* were conceived as a complete entity. Martin points out that in the section of the *Annals* that covers the reign of Nero, much of the narrative consists of smaller, self-contained units in which a single person or theme is the primary focus. He explains that the annalistic framework allows Tacitus to provide a varied and exciting narrative in which he can alternate between descriptions of events within and outside Rome.<sup>103</sup> It is common to see an episode in Tacitus that is thoroughly detailed, encompassing several chapters, that appears detachable.<sup>104</sup> However, these episodes gain their significance from their broader context. Tacitus deliberately chose material for his constituent parts that would contribute to the whole.<sup>105</sup> In an attempt to collate the narratives or explain away the discrepancies, previous scholars seem to have forgotten that ancient historians were not bound by the same rules and standards as are modern historians. We often forget that ancient sources are both historical and literary texts.<sup>106</sup> Ancient historians wrote in order to entertain as often as they wrote to provide accurate depictions of events. Tacitus wrote to communicate certain ideals to the Roman aristocracy and as such we should not be surprised that by studying his representations of certain figures, such as Boudicca, we can reveal an agenda.<sup>107</sup> Particularly in the *Annals*, Tacitus provides a moralizing narrative in which he educates the Romans on the harmful consequences of tyranny, corruption, and the loss of traditional Roman values.<sup>108</sup> While

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<sup>103</sup> Martin (1981) 163.

<sup>104</sup> Walker (1960) 16. In his list of examples, he points out that the Boudicca rebellion is one such episode, but beyond pointing this out, he does not explain why.

<sup>105</sup> Grant (1996) 16.

<sup>106</sup> Mellor (2011) 6.

<sup>107</sup> Hingley and Unwin (2005) 42.

<sup>108</sup> Mellor (2011) 5. I discuss two major themes of the *Annals* in section III of this chapter below (47). It should be noted that Tacitus provides many favourable depictions as well.

it is true that Tacitus generally kept to a chronological, episodic structure, in some cases when he wanted to treat a theme coherently he would alter the chronology of an episode.<sup>109</sup> However, the principal themes of Books 11-14 are more difficult to trace because Tacitus does not present them as a unit, although they can generally be reduced to: (i) the intrigues at court; (ii) the decline of political liberty; and (iii) the demoralization of Roman society.<sup>110</sup> Thus when analyzing specific narratives from within these later books, we should keep these themes in mind. The Boudicca narrative is not the only one Tacitus has deliberately manipulated or even the only one in which he has contradicted an earlier account of the same event. In order to understand what we should be looking for in the Boudicca narrative, I will provide a few examples of such narratives in which Tacitus has deliberately manipulated events to serve his purpose.

#### *Notable Discrepancies and Deliberate Manipulation*

Although there are many examples, the few I have selected should suffice to show that there is a precedent for arguing that Tacitus manipulated his material in order to comment on his main themes. The first example of conscious manipulation is the Roman Empress, Agrippina the Younger. As the great-granddaughter of the emperor Augustus, great-niece of the emperor Tiberius, sister to the emperor Caligula, niece and fourth wife of the emperor Claudius, and mother to the emperor Nero, Agrippina played a very prominent role in the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>111</sup> Her representation in Tacitus is frequently hostile. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it has been argued that Tacitus used Agrippina as a literary construct, designed to serve the larger ends of

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<sup>109</sup> Benario (2012) 115.

<sup>110</sup> Walker (1960) 22.

<sup>111</sup> For a comprehensive look at Agrippina's involvement in the principate see Barrett (1996).

the narratives of the principates of Claudius and Nero.<sup>112</sup> There is one very striking instance in which Agrippina's function as a literary construct can be seen most clearly.

In the beginning of Book 14 Tacitus provides a dramatic account of Agrippina's death, which is emphasized by the fact that she had mysteriously disappeared from the narrative until this moment. In the narrative of events for the years AD 56-58, Tacitus does not mention Agrippina in any capacity.<sup>113</sup> She returns suddenly in the beginning of Book 14 and from that point onward she continues to dominate the events of the narrative until her death, which was ordered by her son Nero. What is particularly strange about her disappearance is that Tacitus tells us that Nero had long contemplated the murder of his mother.<sup>114</sup> It is highly unlikely that, given her involvement in events up to and after these intervening years, Agrippina would be inactive from 56-58, especially to the point where not even her name would be mentioned. It is more likely that this was a deliberate decision by Tacitus to suppress her presence in the narrative in order to provide a dramatic effect by bringing her back in Book 14.<sup>115</sup> Tacitus' description of Agrippina's death is designed to evoke specific feelings from his readers. Before 56, Agrippina played an active role in the *Annals* but Tacitus deliberately diminishes her presence to bring her back at a moment that would best highlight Nero's depravity.<sup>116</sup> Before this point Tacitus paints a negative representation of Agrippina, which is almost forgotten as Tacitus relates other events in the intervening years rather than building up

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<sup>112</sup> Gruen (2006) 9.

<sup>113</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.25-13.58.

<sup>114</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.1: "*diu meditatatum scelus non ultra Nero distulit*".

<sup>115</sup> Martin (1981) 166. It is also noteworthy that Tacitus, Dio, and Suetonius each give a different account of Agrippina's death. Her death provides an interesting, yet different, dramatic function. In trying to emphasize different overall themes, different aspects of the individual narratives will be highlighted and emphasized, and possibly even left out. Cf. Baltussen (2002).

<sup>116</sup> Baltussen (2002) 39.

Agrippina's domineering and destructive character right up to the moment of her death. Tacitus introduces the matricide as an enhanced dramatic element that is aimed at highlighting Nero's deficiencies as a ruler and at marking a turning point in Roman imperial history.<sup>117</sup> Tacitus frequently displays ulterior motives in his deliberate manipulation of events that provide him the opportunity to comment on the failings of the emperor.<sup>118</sup> This is one reason why Boudicca's representation in Book 14 should be considered in light of Nero's reign.

Another characterization within the *Annals* that is a closer parallel to what we see with the different representations of Boudicca is the example of Poppaea Sabina the Younger.<sup>119</sup> Poppaea was the wife of Otho<sup>120</sup> and the second wife of the Emperor Nero. In the *Annals*, Tacitus claims that Poppaea persuaded Nero to murder his mother, Agrippina. He also reports that she pressured Nero to divorce his current wife, Claudia Octavia, so that he could marry her instead and that she later persuaded him to execute Claudia Octavia. Tacitus had first mentioned Poppaea in the *Histories*,<sup>121</sup> and described her again in the *Annals*.<sup>122</sup> He gives her a dramatically different motivation in the *Annals* than was previously supplied in the *Histories*. In the *Histories* he claims that Poppaea was already Nero's mistress when Otho agreed to marry her as a cover-up for the affair.<sup>123</sup> This version of the story is corroborated by Plutarch, Suetonius and Dio. In the

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<sup>117</sup> Baltussen (2002) 39.

<sup>118</sup> Baltussen (2002) 30. Baltussen argues that Book 14 is particularly rich with these instances, which helps to explain the different representation of Boudicca in Book 14 of the *Annals*.

<sup>119</sup> Not to be confused with her mother Poppaea Sabina the Elder, who was compelled by Messalina to commit suicide. See Tac. *Ann.* 11.2.5. For more information on the incongruities within this narrative, see Dawson (1969) 257.

<sup>120</sup> The future emperor from January-April AD 69.

<sup>121</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.13.

<sup>122</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 3.45.

<sup>123</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.13

*Annals*, however, Tacitus tweaks the story and claims that Poppaea was already Otho's wife before she was introduced to Nero and that she plotted to become his mistress. The Poppaea of the *Annals* is ambitious and dominant and Nero's role is adjusted so that he becomes the passive partner of the relationship; he is merely a tool for Poppaea's schemes.<sup>124</sup> The description of Poppaea herself is elaborated in order to make this clear. In the earlier version Nero takes the initiative but in the *Annals* Tacitus makes it clear that Poppaea is the ambitious one. He explicitly states that Poppaea was attracted to Otho because it was rumoured that he was a friend of Nero. Tacitus hints at the possibility of complicity on behalf of Otho but he expends most of his effort in order to condemn Poppaea.<sup>125</sup> The Poppaea of the *Annals* is quite different from the one in the *Histories*. She is ambitious, scheming, and merciless.<sup>126</sup> Thus we have a very similar example of Tacitus' manipulation of events so as to elucidate his overarching themes.<sup>127</sup>

A third example of manipulation involves the placement of an important episode in Roman history. In the beginning of Book 3, Tacitus vividly describes Agrippina the Elder's<sup>128</sup> return to Rome with the ashes of her recently deceased husband Germanicus and with her children in tow.<sup>129</sup> The names of the consuls are not mentioned until three lines into the book, which is unique to *Annals*.<sup>130</sup> The people call Agrippina the one

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<sup>124</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.45; Martin (1981) 169.

<sup>125</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.46

<sup>126</sup> Dawson (1969) 260. I discuss the representation of Poppaea and Agrippina more fully in Chapter Three in the section on language and juxtapositions.

<sup>127</sup> Martin (1981) 169.

<sup>128</sup> Mother to Agrippina the Younger, granddaughter to Augustus, and mother to Caligula.

<sup>129</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 3.4.

<sup>130</sup> Martin and Woodman (1996) 78. With the exception of Book 1, every other book in the Tiberian hexad opens with a new year and the names of the consuls for that year. Book 14 begins similarly to Book 3 but the rest of the Neronian books begin midway through the year. Woodman points out that whichever of those two patterns Tacitus follows, his invariable practice is to begin each year with the name of the consuls.



remaining symbol of the past, the connection to the republican age. At the end of Book 3, Tacitus describes the funeral of Junia,<sup>131</sup> whose descent recalls the long lost days of the Republic. Woodman and Kraus argue that Tacitus intended for these episodes to mirror each other and link Book 3 with the first two books for a thematic connection concerning freedom.<sup>132</sup> Tacitus frames the events of Book 3 with the representations of these women with a focus on their gendered positions and relationship to traditional Republican men. Agrippina arrives as a grieving widow and diligent mother, reflecting the traditional virtues of the Republic, the loss of which Tacitus and other authors frequently mourn.<sup>133</sup> In order to generate an emotional response from his audience, Tacitus emphasizes Agrippina's position as a mother. The concept of motherhood formed a significant literary trope and Tacitus uses it to full effect here.<sup>134</sup> The specific reference to Agrippina's children remind the audience of the misfortunes they suffered, which provides an interesting visual connection to the reference to Boudicca's daughters when she addresses her troops.<sup>135</sup> The children become symbolic representations in their respective narratives, reinforced by the presence of their mothers. Children in particular elicit a great deal of sympathy from the audience.

Junia occupies the similarly honourable position as a virtuous wife. By framing Book 3 with these figures, Tacitus shows that his concept of freedom is linked with the gendered positions of the family, specifically as wives, mothers, and sisters.<sup>136</sup> What is

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<sup>131</sup> Wife and sister respectively of the tyrannicides Cassius and Brutus.

<sup>132</sup> Kraus and Woodman (1997) 95-96. See section III of this chapter for Tacitus' conception of freedom (49).

<sup>133</sup> Milnor (2012) 459. See Chapter Three, section I (60).

<sup>134</sup> This is especially interesting given that Tacitus represented Agrippina more negatively earlier on. See Tac. *Ann.* 1.69

<sup>135</sup> See Tac. *Ann.* 14.35 above.

<sup>136</sup> I discuss the concept in more detail in section III of this chapter (47).

particularly notable about this connection is that Tacitus manipulates the obituary of Arminius by placing it anachronistically at 2.88, apparently two years before he had actually died (by Tacitus' own account).<sup>137</sup> Thus we have an example of Tacitus manipulating his material in order to provide a more coherent commentary on his main themes, as well as symbolic representations of the specific gendered positions within the family.<sup>138</sup>

Finally, Tacitus' account of the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero provides an interesting comparison to the account of Boudicca due to the discrepancy between sources. Specifically, while Suetonius and Dio treat the conspiracy only briefly, Tacitus allows the narrative twenty-seven chapters.<sup>139</sup> Woodman points out that Tacitus gave the conspiracy a coherency that it did not possess in reality by starting it in AD 65 and ending it with the end of Book 15.<sup>140</sup> There is a notable discrepancy between Tacitus' account of how the plan fell apart, and that of Plutarch's. Tacitus describes an elaborate betrayal by one of the leading conspirators, Scaevinus, while Plutarch explains that it was simply because one conspirator made a cryptic remark to a passer-by.<sup>141</sup> What is perhaps most interesting about this discrepancy is its reception by modern scholars. Most prefer Tacitus' version because it contains more detail, but as Woodman points out, detail should not be mistaken for accuracy or precision.<sup>142</sup> He explains that Tacitus

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<sup>137</sup> See Woodman and Kraus (1997) 116, n. 72. For other examples of displacement in Tacitus, see Ginsburg (1981) 21-2, 55-72.

<sup>138</sup> See Chapter Three (57).

<sup>139</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.48-74.

<sup>140</sup> Woodman (1998) 190.

<sup>141</sup> Woodman (1998) 197.

<sup>142</sup> Woodman (1998) 197. Dawson (1969) 261 makes a similar argument concerning the more detailed and vivid representation of Agrippina the Younger's death. She argues that Tacitus' version is so unforgettable that scholars prefer to accept it as authentic to the exclusion of the more 'boring' versions, yet those versions present fewer problems and discrepancies.

developed the narrative of the Pisonian conspiracy to comment on Nero's reign and thus many of the details are embellishments made to drive home Tacitus' point.<sup>143</sup>

We can apply these examples to the reception of the Boudicca narratives. Du Toit claims that Tacitus' version of the rebellion in the *Annals* is more accurate than the *Agricola* because of the greater amount of detail.<sup>144</sup> Based on Tacitus' own writing, however, I contend that this is not necessarily true, and Boudicca's speech provides a hint of that. Woodman considers whether it was even a common element of British warfare to address the troops before battle, concluding that we will likely never know.<sup>145</sup> It is important to note that the speech was in some way invented, and if such a major feature of the Boudicca narrative was at best only partly factual, what does that tell us about the rest of the narrative and the way in which Tacitus treats his material? Though speeches need to be dealt with separately to some degree, Tacitus clearly excelled at the imaginative reconstruction of events and we should be wary when there are indications that the work blends manipulation with historical reality. This is not to say that the rebellion did not occur or that none of the information in the *Annals* is useful, but that one should also consider the narrative from Tacitus' viewpoint instead. Therefore, analysis of episodes such as the Boudicca narrative ought to pay particular attention to the genre of the work in question.

The brevity of the account in the *Agricola* compared to the detailed account in the *Annals*, and the substance of the details added, indicate that the differences were far more likely to stem from a difference in genre, each of which would have had a different

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<sup>143</sup> Woodman argues that Nero himself was very dramatic and thus the dramatic elements in the Pisonian conspiracy narrative were employed to complement this trait.

<sup>144</sup> Du Toit (1977) 153.

<sup>145</sup> Woodman (2004) xiv-xv.

theme. The *Agricola* was a biography of Tacitus' father-in-law that was intended to serve in place of a traditional eulogy since eulogies were forbidden at the time of Agricola's death.<sup>146</sup> Domitian's murder in 96 provided Tacitus with the opportunity to honour his father-in-law. Tacitus expresses genuine sorrow at the loss of Agricola and this is the primary motivation in writing this work. The brief description of Boudicca's rebellion is one of the many events Tacitus summarizes in order to provide a sketch of the situation in Britain as Agricola found it.<sup>147</sup> Thus Tacitus' very reasons for including the Boudicca narrative are quite different and should not be construed as constituent parts of a continuous narrative that extends through disparate works. Keeping in mind the themes in the narrative that affect the representation of characters it is necessary to turn to a discussion of the themes in the *Annals* that play a role in the formation of the Boudicca narrative.

### ***III. Themes in the Annals***

A particularly interesting aspect of the *Annals* is the terse treatment of events that do not serve to further one of the author's primary themes.<sup>148</sup> In Books 1-5 Tacitus relates all foreign affairs (with the exception of Germanicus' campaigns) briefly and concisely.<sup>149</sup> These events do not appear to reflect back on his main themes and thus are dismissed quickly, without the use of dramatic elements. We see a change toward the end

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<sup>146</sup> Mellor (1993) 10-11, 14.

<sup>147</sup> Tac. *Agr.* 18: *Hunc Britanniae statum, has bellorum vices media iam aetate transgressus Agricola invenit.* It is safe to conclude that given the purpose of the *Agricola*, there was no place for an elaborate, dramatic account like that which is given in the *Annals*.

<sup>148</sup> Please note that when I use the term 'theme' throughout this thesis I do not mean to suggest that Tacitus meant to push a certain idea upon his readers but that there are specific ideas that recur throughout the *Annals*. Thus there are certain episodes that fit into these broad categories and provide unity to the whole.

<sup>149</sup> Walker (1960) 28.

of Book 13, in which Tacitus' treatment of foreign affairs becomes more dramatic and elaborate, and are far more detailed. In these episodes Tacitus places emphasis on his themes, particularly freedom and the dangers of imperialism.<sup>150</sup> Tacitus' account of Eastern affairs in 11.8-10 provides a notable contrast to narratives such as the Boudiccan rebellion. In these chapters Tacitus relates a narrative concerning Mithridates and the Parthians. His account is brief and lucid with no attempt at dramatic effect. At no point during the narrative does Tacitus attempt to elicit sympathy from the reader for any of the main characters. In this particular episode his style is concise and to the point, which indicates that, although the account was necessary to move the narrative forward, it does not complement any of the overarching themes of the work.<sup>151</sup> What we can extrapolate from this is that the amount of detail and number of dramatic elements (as well as the demand for sympathy that we saw in the overview) in the Boudicca narrative likely indicates its greater meaning in the work as a whole. By reading the Boudicca narrative in its context, two issues in particular present themselves in the narrative: (i) freedom and the loss of Republican values, and (ii) the domestication of the imperial state.<sup>152</sup> In the following sections I will explain these two issues, although I will provide the in-depth analysis of the various ways at which they come through in the following chapter.

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<sup>150</sup> See section II of this chapter. (47). Tacitus' themes in the later books largely revolve around the intrigues of court, the decline of political liberty, and the demoralization of Roman society.

<sup>151</sup> Walker (1960) 34-35 provides a more detailed analysis of this account and its significance. See also Keitel (1978).

<sup>152</sup> I am not arguing that these are the only themes in the *Annals*, but that these are the two that directly affect the Boudicca narrative.

*Freedom and the Loss of Republican Values*

Tacitus' choice for where to begin the *Annals* has long been acknowledged as a significant indication of the overall theme of the work.<sup>153</sup> That Tacitus began, not with the end of the civil war between Octavian and Antony, nor the moment when Octavian received the title Augustus, but with the death of Augustus and his succession by Tiberius indicates to the reader that this is not specifically a study of the principate, but a study of the end of the republican way.<sup>154</sup> Syme argues that starting earlier with Augustus would have better shown the realities of power; however, Tiberius' accession was the pivotal moment at which it became clear that the Roman state was now an autocracy, and it is this feature with which Tacitus is the most concerned. Wirszubski argues that this does not mean that Tacitus had a problem with the institution of the principate itself, but that he took issue with the manner in which the absolute power of the *princeps* was sometimes employed.<sup>155</sup> This latter explanation helps to resolve the apparent paradox that Tacitus was complaining about the very institution that allowed him, a provincial, the status he enjoyed in Rome.<sup>156</sup> In fact, Tacitus espoused the peace that the principate brought to Rome on numerous occasions.<sup>157</sup> Tacitus' primary concerns, then, are the motives of those who wield absolute power<sup>158</sup> and the way in

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<sup>153</sup> Woodman (2004) xiv; Woodman and Kraus (1997) 91; Benario (2012) 109; Griffin (1995) 35; Milnor 2012; and Syme (1958) 367-371, 427. Each author cites different reasons for his/her conclusion. Although Syme (367) argued that Tacitus later regretted the decision to begin here, Griffin (35) explains that his argument is illogical.

<sup>154</sup> Woodman (2004) xiv.

<sup>155</sup> Wirszubski (1950) 160-164.

<sup>156</sup> See Joshel (1997) 223.

<sup>157</sup> For example, Tac. *Ann.* 1.9.5 and 3.28.3.

<sup>158</sup> Griffin (1995) 35. Griffin holds that the reason for beginning with the accession of Tiberius was because one of Tacitus' main themes was the *dissimulatio* of Tiberius. She argues that this moment showed the "ready-made" system of *dissimulatio* and Tiberius' characteristic insincerity. While this plays a role in the representation of Tiberius, the theme could well have been advanced even had Tacitus chosen to begin earlier in Augustus' reign.

which that power can corrupt the individual.<sup>159</sup> More importantly, Tacitus disapproves of those Roman people who were willing to obey those who abused their power.<sup>160</sup> Thus, such oppressive rule both causes and is caused by the moral degeneracy of the Roman people.<sup>161</sup> It is this concept of *libertas* (“freedom”) that Tacitus had in mind when criticizing certain emperors; it was not the constitution itself that caused the loss of freedom, but certain emperors and the Roman People’s willingness to serve them. Tacitus lauds those who had the courage to preserve their self-respect when confronted with an emperor who abused his power, and especially those who did so amidst others who did not.<sup>162</sup>

As Woodman points out, Rome’s relationship with foreign subjects mirrors those in Rome.<sup>163</sup> Tacitus put emphasis on the thoughtless cruelty of the Roman administration in the provinces and so his most elaborate and dramatic writing appears in those contexts.<sup>164</sup> Because Boudicca’s rebellion involves foreign subjects, based on the way in which Tacitus treats his material, we should expect to see a scenario that evokes or complements events in Rome during the reign of Nero, and more specifically, the submissiveness of the Roman people under Nero.

Throughout Tacitus’ account of Boudicca’s rebellion he places continuous emphasis on the notion of *libertas* and the Britons’ readiness to fight for their freedom. The way that Tacitus represents their struggle indicates his admiration for their refusal to

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<sup>159</sup> Wirszubski (1950) 163.

<sup>160</sup> Wirszubski (1950) 164.

<sup>161</sup> Grant (1996) 22.

<sup>162</sup> Wirszubski (1950) 166.

<sup>163</sup> Woodman (2004) xiv.

<sup>164</sup> Walker (1960) 28, 33.

acquiesce to the violent Roman occupation and administration.<sup>165</sup> The positioning of this event in the middle of Nero's reign deems it necessary to view the narrative in light of Neronian Rome. Boudicca's revolt against the Roman presence in Britain serves as a conceptual model for Tacitus' criticism of the oppression of Rome under Nero.<sup>166</sup> When we consider the rebellion in this context, Tacitus' suggestion to his readers that resistance to such power is possible becomes clear.

### *The Domestication of the Imperial State*

The beginning of the *Annals* indicates more than just the loss of Republican values. By choosing to begin the work with the accession of Tiberius, and more particularly, the involvement of his mother Livia in his accession, Tacitus shows the moment in which the state became inextricably tied with the family – with *one* family.<sup>167</sup> Again, this is not a concern with the actual foundation of the imperial system, but rather how that system as founded by Augustus, was passed down to less and less qualified descendants. This was due to Augustus' propaganda and the emphasis he put on family during his reign. The dynastic element to Augustus' reign was his primary focus and, in his account, the scandalous accession of Tiberius summarizes the various problems that surrounded this new system.<sup>168</sup> More significantly, because of the important position that women could hold in the family, this meant that the women in the imperial family could potentially wield power over the Roman state. Suddenly women's domestic power within the

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<sup>165</sup> Roberts (1988) 126.

<sup>166</sup> Roberts (1988) 129.

<sup>167</sup> Milnor (2012) 467.

<sup>168</sup> Woodman (2004) xii.



household could make a great deal of civic difference.<sup>169</sup> The selection of a ruler that ideally would be left to the Senate or even a ‘good’ emperor could fall into the hands of the imperial wives and mothers, who frequently used schemes and their sexuality to achieve their own selections.<sup>170</sup> For Tacitus, this meant that the divide between what were originally the public and private spheres had become blurred, which is one explanation for Tacitus’ consistent focus on the domestic affairs of the Roman emperors. Before looking at how the Boudicca narrative complements this theme, it is necessary to look briefly at Augustus’ political changes to understand what I mean when I say women were now able to wield power.

When Augustus brought an end to the civil wars with the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 30 BC, he effectively became the last man standing and in January of 27 BC he received the title ‘Augustus’.<sup>171</sup> In his imagery, Augustus was often presented as the head of a family and eventually in 2 BC the Senate awarded him with the honorific title ‘*Pater Patriae*’ (“Father of the Country/Fatherland”). The focus on Augustus’ familial unit appeared in all aspects of Roman culture: contemporary art, building programs, cult, ceremonies, literature, legislation, politics, etc.<sup>172</sup> He devoted attention to legislation designed to restore the Roman family to traditional values, in which individuals who wished to participate in public life were required to be married and have children.<sup>173</sup> Thus Augustus took what were originally private matters and brought them into the public sphere. The members of Augustus’ immediate family were

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<sup>169</sup> Milnor (2012) 460; MacMullen (1990) 169.

<sup>170</sup> Rutland (1978) 15.

<sup>171</sup> There is far more to how Augustus achieved these feats and how he wielded power. For a detailed look at Augustus’ rise to power see Galinsky (2007).

<sup>172</sup> Severy (2003) 3. For more on Augustus’ use of imagery see Zanker (1990).

<sup>173</sup> Severy (2003) 4. The legislation also criminalized adultery.

also expected to abide by these new rules and became models for proper aristocratic behaviour.<sup>174</sup> The iconography of the family was thus made public under Augustus. This was an unprecedented move, as prior to Augustus' reign mortal women and children were not represented in public art.<sup>175</sup> Augustus' imagery effectively redefined the public and private spheres in terms of the imperial family. Severy explains further that Augustus managed the city and empire the way the head of a family managed his household.<sup>176</sup> The blurring of public and private reached its culmination in the pivotal moment when the establishment of the dynasty was realized, when Tiberius succeeded Augustus as the head of the imperial family, and thus the head of the imperial state.<sup>177</sup>

The beginning of the *Annals* indicates Tacitus' concern with this new system that allowed women to become involved in civic affairs to a greater degree, signified by his detailed narrative of Livia's involvement in Tiberius' accession to power.<sup>178</sup> In Livia's literary representation it is through her domestic role as wife and mother that she is to be feared.<sup>179</sup> Tacitus achieves this representation with a particular focus on the gendered positions of women. The *Annals* are bracketed by the representations of Livia and Agrippina the Younger, two domineering mothers who are actively involved in the public sphere. By the time the narrative reaches the reign of Nero, the boundary between civic affairs and the domestic sphere is almost completely broken down. Thus we can

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<sup>174</sup> Severy (2003) 5. For the culmination of the Augustus' image as father of the state, see Severy Ch. 7.

<sup>175</sup> Zanker (1990).

<sup>176</sup> Severy (2003) 5. By employing slaves and freedmen or by raising children of allies in his own home, for example. As we shall see this same maneuver plays a role in Tacitus' criticism of Claudius.

<sup>177</sup> Severy (2003) 5.

<sup>178</sup> I.e. women were involved in public affairs prior to Augustus' political changes, for example, Fulvia and Hortensia, but Augustus' changes made it possible to actually assume some authority.

<sup>179</sup> Milnor (2012) 469. I will examine this in more detail in Chapter Three, but it is through her domestic role that she is able to realize her ambition for power.

consider the Domus Aurea as the physical manifestation of Nero's inability to maintain that distinction between public and private. There is a similar occurrence in Livy's representation of Lucretia, where the Roman state is intertwined with the domestic sphere.<sup>180</sup> The difference between Livy's and Tacitus' representations, however, is the political activity in Livy is caused by a domestic affair but the woman is not directly active in that change. In Tacitus, by the time we arrive at the representation of Agrippina the Younger, imperial women had established the way of translating their gendered domestic roles into active political influence.<sup>181</sup> Imperial women were at their most powerful when performing their domestic roles as sisters, wives, and mothers to the emperors. Tacitus' very concern, then, is not a question of reestablishing the proper roles for men and women but of questioning the system that made women's involvement in the political sphere possible.<sup>182</sup>

The Boudicca narrative complements this image of the near-complete breakdown of the divide between public and private. This is the *only* one of the three narratives in which we have a familial representation of Boudicca, where she appears as wife, widow and mother and is accompanied by her daughters. Here is a representation of a family and a household that is invaded by the Roman army and administration, elements of the public sphere. With this inclusion of a household element, Tacitus is able to emphasize what he sees as a significant issue under the principate. Tacitus constructed a version of events that mirrors and is in keeping with the circumstances that affected Roman politics in the city. By having the public sphere invade the private in the Boudicca narrative he symbolically represents the near complete dissolution of the divide. Just as the imperial

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<sup>180</sup> Livy, *AUC* 1.57-60.

<sup>181</sup> Milnor (2012) 473.

<sup>182</sup> Milnor (2012) 473.

family became representative of the state, Boudicca's family becomes representative of the Britons as a whole and Boudicca's position as a mother is superimposed onto the people, thus transforming her into mother of her people. Her subsequent military involvement reflects the dissolution of the divide between the public and private spheres under Nero.

### ***Conclusions***

Based on the emphasis in Tacitean scholarship on contradictions and manipulations in his works, one cannot simply conclude that the differences between Tacitus' accounts for the rebellion are merely corrections or elaborations. Tacitus chose what to include in or exclude from his narratives and I have shown that he most often manipulated events in order to promote issues that he highlighted throughout the *Annals*. I argue that the Boudicca narrative is designed to comment on the aspects of the reign of Nero, specifically the loss of freedom and the domestication of the imperial state. Boudicca's representation reflects Tacitus' main concerns about the way power can be abused. Specifically, it is Boudicca's position as a mother that is the means by which Tacitus transmits these themes. In the following chapter I will turn to how Boudicca's motherhood affects the various layers of the narrative to highlight these themes. By representing Boudicca as a mother Tacitus provided the opportunity to assert his overarching focus on freedom and the empire.

We cannot know which account is real, if any. It could be that Boudicca *was* a mother and her daughters *were* raped and this was actually the catalyst for the rebellion and for some reason, perhaps again because of the aim or scale of the work, Tacitus

chose not to represent it in his *Agricola*.<sup>183</sup> Or Boudicca actually did not have daughters and the rape never happened and Tacitus invented it for thematic reasons. We cannot conclude that it one version or the other, but regardless, that it is included in the *Annals* and not elsewhere, whether true or not, is enough reason to study the inclusion in detail. This importance is further indicated by Tacitus' manipulation of materials and the precedents shown above: there must be a reason for its inclusion. Scholars have frequently discredited Tacitus as a source and yet still accept that Boudicca was a mother. By simply accepting the inclusion, we ignore that this is the *only* time she appears in this role in the ancient sources. The representation of Boudicca as a mother carries an important message through which Tacitus transmits a number of Roman ideals, and it is to that aspect that I now turn.

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<sup>183</sup> Genre or theme.

### Chapter 3: **Boudicca: Wife, Mother, Symbol**

#### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter I argued that the methods and findings of Tacitean scholarship should be applied to the Boudicca narrative in order to understand more fully how Tacitus treats his subject matter and characterizes individuals. The themes that are present in the *Annals*, and those of Book 14 in particular, can affect the episodes in the narrative in various ways. I explained that scholarship on other narratives within the *Annals* shows that there are precedents for Tacitus' manipulation of material and that this scholarship can be applied to the Boudicca narrative. I concluded that because Boudicca's status as a mother is only included in the *Annals* and not the other two narratives it is necessary to study the inclusion in more detail to understand how it affects the progression of the narrative. Many scholars have acknowledged that Boudicca's motherhood forms a significant part of her representation and it is usually simply cited as a way to elicit sympathy from the audience, and it remains to be discussed how this was achieved.<sup>184</sup>

In this chapter I argue that the inclusion of motherhood affects the narrative at multiple levels. What might seem to be a small part of the overall story actually presents Tacitus various avenues by which he is able to convey his messages. The importance of the inclusion is emphasized by the fact that Boudicca's motherhood appears only in the *Annals*. Though the exact reasons for the inclusion in this particular case are not explicit, it is nonetheless possible to discuss *how* it affects the narrative, from which we might

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<sup>184</sup> E.g. Braund (1996) 145; Crawford (2002); Dyson (1971) 262. These authors maintain that Boudicca assumes a symbolic role in the rebellion but do not elaborate on what that role was or how it was achieved.

infer the motivation for it. It is necessary to begin with a discussion of motherhood and constructions of gender<sup>185</sup> in Roman culture to explain why Boudicca's motherhood would have resonated so heavily with a Roman audience (section I). I will look at important aspects of motherhood and discuss examples of illustrious mothers from various sources in order to provide a generalized background that I will then apply to the Boudicca narrative. I will not discuss the employment of sexuality in the narratives, but rather will focus on Tacitus' utilization of negative and positive language in his constructions of character. Boudicca's involvement in the rebellion is often interpreted as a transgression of the boundaries of the traditional male sphere, leading to the conclusion that he presents a negative image of Boudicca. I will test this conclusion against various examples of negative representations of women in the *Annals* to show that there is little evidence for a negative reading of Boudicca. In conjunction with the language employed, the juxtapositions in the text of the *Annals* show that the inclusion of motherhood is designed to catalogue Boudicca within a recurrent theme of wives and mothers, one of the many tropes that Tacitus uses to reflect on his greater themes. It is here that I will employ a gendered reading of narratives from the *Annals* that are appropriate for this discussion and apply to these the various aspects discussed in section I, such as the aspects of honourable mothers and scheming adulteresses.<sup>186</sup>

By casting Boudicca as a mother Tacitus allows the inclusion of daughters, who provide the symbolism that accompanies their rape as well as the *libertas* trope. Tacitus

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<sup>185</sup> I discuss what I mean by 'gender' more fully below but for now please note that I refer not to a fixed bodily state but to a cultural category that was constantly shifting depending on the social status of the individual involved (among other factors). Cf. Montserrat (2000) 154-155.

<sup>186</sup> See Pomeroy (1995), an influential and somewhat controversial study which applies modern feminism to women in the ancient world. As well, to avoid repetition, I will not apply the aspects discussed in section I to Boudicca until the end of section II, since they come together to provide the same outcome (further discussed in sections III-IV).

takes a well-known trope from Roman literature where a sexual transgression acts as a catalyst for rebellion but manipulates it so that it can directly reflect on his own themes. Lastly, I discuss the ways in which Tacitus molds Boudicca into a Roman matron, bringing her characterization to a familiar image for his Roman reader. I argue that by assigning Roman ideals and attributes essentially he makes her less threatening and thus able to convey a message to a Roman audience that otherwise would have fallen on deaf ears. At the same time, Tacitus also capitalizes on Boudicca's 'otherness' in order to exemplify themes for which the use of a Roman woman would not have sufficed.

As a whole this chapter explores the various levels that motherhood brings to the narrative. It is important to remember that I do not aim to retrieve the actual female experience. My intention is not to suggest that Boudicca's representation reflects the life of either a female British leader during Roman occupation or a typical woman of Rome. This is primarily a study of *how* Tacitus chose to represent what may or may not be a historical reality and *why* he chose to do so. For a long time scholars tended to accept uncritically the descriptions of women as they were presented.<sup>187</sup> It is now generally accepted that references to women in literature are more likely to reflect androcentric ideals that are concerned with how a woman should be rather than how that particular woman was.<sup>188</sup> This was achieved by portraying either a woman with respectable virtues that other women should emulate or a woman with a disreputable character that women should avoid. We can approach Tacitus' representations as his own contemplations of

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<sup>187</sup> Dixon (2001) 10.

<sup>188</sup> Dixon (2001) 10-11.



women, which reflect the attitudes of the larger social group for which he was writing.<sup>189</sup> Since the authors were usually male, these musings about women were often constructed in terms of women's sexual and reproductive roles and were often moralizing in nature rather than presenting simple observations of reality.<sup>190</sup> The difficulty with this type of reading, however, is that it has led many to attempt to categorize women under one label or the other, either good or bad.<sup>191</sup> The following sections, therefore, involve a close reading of the narrative and a discussion of gender constructions in order to discern the multiple layers of the narrative in which, as I argue, motherhood plays an integral role.

### ***I. Women in Roman Culture***

Asserting the importance of motherhood in the Boudicca narrative carries little weight without first explaining the perceptions of women in Roman society and culture.<sup>192</sup> Understanding Roman gender constructions will help to dispel the notion that women can be separated into binary opposites, where the first group consists of 'good' women who fulfill the criteria set out by men while the other group consists of 'bad' women who do not. It seems naïve and indeed antiquated to argue that if a woman engages in one 'unfeminine' act she must be consigned to a long list of other unfortunate

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<sup>189</sup> This is not to say that Tacitus was *primarily* concerned with gender constructions, or even with women for that matter but simply that his own contemplations play a role in his overall views on the current state of Rome. See Chapter Two, section III (47).

<sup>190</sup> Dixon (2001) 16.

<sup>191</sup> E.g. D'Ambra (2006) and Santoro L'Hoir (1994).

<sup>192</sup> Due to restrictions in space I cannot hope to cover all aspects of motherhood in Roman culture and thus this section is not meant to be exhaustive. Our knowledge of Roman mothers comes from a variety of sources (inscriptions, epitaphs, medical writings, satire, biography, etc.) and can often be problematic due to the differences in genre. Therefore what I provide here are more or less necessarily simplified views of mothers. One might perceive this section as the 'highlights'; just enough information to help elucidate the importance of motherhood in the narrative based on its importance in Roman culture.

women who have likewise earned the negative label. And yet the idea persists.<sup>193</sup> I do not mean to suggest that all women who have been categorized as ‘bad’ should not have been; assuredly Roman authors often made it clear that they were representing a ‘bad’ woman and a part of this argument involves testing Boudicca’s representation against negative portrayals in the *Annals*.<sup>194</sup> I do, however, challenge the assumption that if one ‘bad’ woman has committed a certain offence, such as involvement in political or military affairs, then all other women who have committed a similar offence must also be condemned in like terms. In such cases I would posit that it is more prudent to study the entire episode and its context to ensure that hasty conclusions do not miss a greater motivation on Tacitus’ part. Boudicca is often condemned casually as an aside when mentioning that the Romans thought it was dishonourable for a woman to be involved in the military.<sup>195</sup> However, her representation is far too complex to dismiss it so easily. I base this argument on studies of Roman gender constructions,<sup>196</sup> which I contend can be applied effectively to the representations of women (and men) in Tacitus’ *Annals*.<sup>197</sup> An understanding of Roman gender constructions is vital to the analysis of Boudicca’s representation in the *Annals*.

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<sup>193</sup> For example, see Santoro L’Hoir (1994). She argues that authors characterized female leaders with masculine attributes to show that they were usurpers of male authority. In my summary of the way various women have been employed in literature, however, I argue that women sometimes could take on male attributes without risking their reputations. See *Wives and Mothers in Literature* below (63).

<sup>194</sup> Dixon (2001) 35.

<sup>195</sup> D’Ambra (2006); Santoro L’Hoir (1994)

<sup>196</sup> See Montserrat (2000) 153-155; Späth (2012)

<sup>197</sup> Arguably, this is true of the *Agricola* and Dio’s *Roman History* as well. It would be useful to apply this methodology to Boudicca’s representations in the other sources, but given the present restriction of space this must be reserved for a later study.

### *Gender Constructions*

Historically, the use of the word ‘gender’ has been problematic, largely due to the multiple meanings that accompany it.<sup>198</sup> For example, often the word ‘gender’ is used interchangeably with the word ‘sex’ when establishing the difference between man and woman. This is complicated by the fact that some dictionaries *define* gender as sex, linking ‘gender’ to the definition, “either of the two major forms of individuals...that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures”.<sup>199</sup> This misleading connection gives the idea that gender, too, is largely defined by biological rather than cultural characteristics. In the following discussion I use the word gender to mean, “the state of being male or female”, a definition that is “used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones”.<sup>200</sup> This is especially applicable to Roman society where gender is determined by cultural factors that translate into hierarchies of power.<sup>201</sup> In constructing gender roles, the Romans defined societal power differentials that existed between individuals, the criteria of which were not always determined by the individual’s biological sex.<sup>202</sup> Thus these gender constructions reflected Roman attitudes towards dominance and submission.<sup>203</sup> Unlike masculinity in men, which was earned by maintaining a dominant position over others, the Romans considered femininity in

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<sup>198</sup> Späth (2012) 433.

<sup>199</sup> “gender”. Merriam-Webster.com. <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (7 Feb 2013).

<sup>200</sup> “gender”. Oxforddictionaries.com. <http://oxforddictionaries.com> (7 Feb 2013).

<sup>201</sup> Montserrat (2000) 155.

<sup>202</sup> Skinner (1997) 3.

<sup>203</sup> Skinner (1997) 3. These constructions were based on Roman ideals concerning masculinity, which were closely tied with the dynamics of sexual relations. For example, sexual intercourse was thought to be the “bodily penetration of an inferior” (3). This construction automatically reduced the status of the penetrated individual to a ‘feminized’ state. The dominant partner is therefore always considered superior to the passive partner.

women to be an inherent attribute.<sup>204</sup> A man who did not maintain his dominance over others, or who engaged in specifically feminine behaviours, would move along the scale towards femininity. Correspondingly, a woman who encroached on the male sphere and sought out dominance over others necessarily took on masculine traits and moved across the scale towards masculinity. For example, female sexual initiative defied the ideal of passivity in women and so this behaviour was associated with iniquity.<sup>205</sup> The more an individual acquired masculine or feminine traits the further he or she moved along the scale.

Thus there was a very broad spectrum of gendered positions available to Roman men and women between what D'Ambra terms 'extreme masculinity and femininity'.<sup>206</sup> The binary opposites that we so frequently see in discussions of representations of men and women in Tacitus are illogical when considered in light of Roman conceptions of gender. Gender in Roman culture is not simple and cannot be divided into either good or bad categories. The situation in literature, particularly in Tacitus, is just as complex. In reality we should expect to see varied positions in the literature that correlate with conceptions of gender in Roman society and culture. It should take far more than one transgression or negative word to classify a woman as 'bad'.

### *Wives and Mothers*

Marriage was the universal objective that, ideally, elite Roman women desired to attain and the primary purpose of marriage was to provide legitimate heirs.<sup>207</sup> Since

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<sup>204</sup> Späth (2012) 436-440.

<sup>205</sup> Dixon (2011) 37.

<sup>206</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 15.

<sup>207</sup> Dixon (1990) 92; D'Ambra (2006) 49.

women required the firm hand of male authority, teen girls were domesticated by marriage; it was marriage that completed a woman and invested her with a social presence.<sup>208</sup> Mothers take the prestige of their fathers and husbands and transmit it to their children.<sup>209</sup> Honourable women were those who fulfilled this duty and women who did not were dangerous. The *matrona* designated a particular category of women who had attained the ideal marital state, a category that specifically included motherhood.<sup>210</sup> The female biological role in reproduction was of great importance to the Roman system of citizenship. Consequently women who did not procreate were connected with scathing and/or unflattering descriptions in the sources. For example, such a woman would often be typified as unstable and prone to desire and it was thought that desire would inevitably lead to adultery.<sup>211</sup> There were no paternity tests in ancient Rome, and accordingly if a woman committed adultery the paternity and descent of the child would be thrown into question. Given the importance of citizenship in Rome<sup>212</sup> it is understandable that women's sexuality was so often discussed in negative terms; unrestrained sexuality was dangerous and could potentially undermine the state. Traces of this concern are present in many of the unfavorable representations of women in literature.<sup>213</sup> Another facet of this concern is that adultery brought shame to the *paterfamilias* and, by extension, the entire *familia*.<sup>214</sup>

The mother in Roman culture was a formidable stereotype, the elements of which feature prominently in the representation of Boudicca in the *Annals*. Yet due to the

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<sup>208</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 12.

<sup>209</sup> Späth (2012) 442.

<sup>210</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 46.

<sup>211</sup> Such as Messalina. See Tac. *Ann.* 11.12.

<sup>212</sup> See Gardner (2002) and Sherwin-White (1996).

<sup>213</sup> Cartimandua (Tac. *Hist.* 3.45, Tac. *Ann.* 12.40); Messalina (Tac. *Ann.* 11.12).

<sup>214</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 49.

emphasis on her military involvement these elements remain largely unacknowledged.

When the authors praised women for being good mothers, there was little emphasis on their softer side; rather, our sources more frequently admire mothers who display vigilance, high standards, and an unwavering loyalty to their children.<sup>215</sup> For example, in his *Dialogue on Oratory*, Tacitus presents us with the image of firm mothers who devote themselves entirely to their children's upbringing and education, the type of motherhood necessary for producing distinguished sons:<sup>216</sup>

*nam pridem suus cuique filius, ex casta parente natus, non in cellula emptae nutricis, sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur, cuius praecipua laus erat tueri domum et inservire liberis. eligebatur autem maior aliqua natu propinqua, cuius probatis spectatisque moribus omnis eiusdem familiae suboles committeretur; coram qua neque dicere fas erat quod turpe dictu, neque [6] facere quod inhonestum factu videretur. ac non studia modo curasque, sed remissiones etiam lususque puerorum sanctitate quadam ac verecundia temperabat. sic Corneliā Gracchorum, sic Aureliā Caesaris, sic Atiam Augusti matrem praefuisse educationibus ac produxisse principes liberos accepimus.*

*For long ago the son of each and every person, the child from a chaste mother, was raised, not in the chamber of a purchased nurse, but in the bosom and embrace of the mother, for whom it was the special glory to protect her home and be devoted to her children...in whose presence it was unseemly to speak a disgraceful word or do a dishonourable deed. And with a certain piety and modesty she regulated not only the studies and cares of the boys, but also their recreations and games. Thus we accept that Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, thus Aurelia, mother of Caesar, thus Atia, mother of Augustus, presided over their children's education and lead forth the greatest children.*

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<sup>215</sup> Dixon (1990) 2.

<sup>216</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 28. It is notable that these examples are given in contrast to mothers who are coterminous with the author. These 'modern' mothers are accused of handing off their children to slaves to raise and of allowing their children to listen to their own shameless gossip rather than stories of virtues and modesty. This suggests a theme common to Roman sources in which the authors reminisce about the values of their ancestors, a theme that appears in the representation of Boudicca as a mother, which I will discuss more fully below.

These illustrious mothers are not praised for tenderly caring for their children, but rather for their diligence in providing a proper education. Great mothers were also those who acted as guardians of traditional culture and values.<sup>217</sup>

It is notable that many mothers who are praised for their great qualities were widowed.<sup>218</sup> Due to the age gap between husbands and wives (women typically married at a younger age than men), women frequently outlived their husbands.<sup>219</sup> Because of this, mothers took on the responsibility of a sole parent and it was this responsibility that largely influenced the respect given to such a woman. The ideal standard female behaviour can be seen in a mother's support for her sons and daughters.<sup>220</sup>

#### *Wives and Mothers In Literature*

It is clear that the stereotype of the good mother existed in Roman culture but it is useful to look briefly at examples of the various ways in which authors deployed the stereotype in literature. This involves examples of not only good mothers but also those who failed to meet the standards required to praise mothers. Some examples suggest simply that motherhood occupied a position of great importance in Roman thought, while others indicate that the inclusion or exclusion of motherhood affects the narrative in a discernible way. These examples give credence to the argument that motherhood is an integral component of Boudicca's representation in Tacitus' *Annals*.

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<sup>217</sup> Dixon (2001) 56; MacDonald (1988) 44.

<sup>218</sup> Dixon (1990) 6.

<sup>219</sup> For the age of marriage in ancient Rome see Lelis et al. (2003).

<sup>220</sup> Späth (2012) 442.

Female characters in literature often provided models of ideal behaviour to which Roman women were expected to aspire.<sup>221</sup> The variety of characters served as an ideological cultural tool by which men attempted to control wives, mothers, and daughters. It is perhaps this moralizing function that has led many scholars to seek good or bad labels for these women. If a female character performed one act that might earn disapproval from male citizenry then how can she serve as an appropriate model for women? That is, if an author were promoting a particular woman's representation as model behaviour then he would not have had that woman perform any 'bad' acts. However, this standpoint attaches too much weight to the idea of women functioning as models. While female characters certainly presented qualities Roman women should emulate, it is unrealistic to assume that women would be expected to mimic every aspect of a given female character. For example, women could respect the ideals presented in Livy's Lucretia but it is unlikely that the average Roman woman would be willing to go to the same lengths to preserve a chaste reputation.<sup>222</sup> Moreover respectable matrons could be represented with male characteristics in literature without risking negative implications about their sexuality.<sup>223</sup> Conversely, women could also be represented with male characteristics that suggested a more threatening participation in the narrative, where they are characterized as aggressive, domineering, and sexually insatiable.<sup>224</sup> Often complaints by authors about women were interrupted by infrequent praise for the women who exhibited appropriate male virtues. The history of women appears as a history of interactions between males and females, a

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<sup>221</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 6.

<sup>222</sup> The story of Lucretia will be discussed more fully in section III (90).

<sup>223</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 13.

<sup>224</sup> For example, Agrippina the Younger and Cartimandua. See section II of this chapter. For a more detailed study of Cartimandua, see Howarth (2009).



history that is discussed by authors in terms of women's sexual and reproductive roles.<sup>225</sup>

Thus the standard faithful and childbearing wife emerges in juxtaposition to the more frequent representations of adulterous activities.<sup>226</sup>

Roman authors grappled with the way in which they were to account for powerful women, blurring the divide between dichotomous gender roles, which manifests a fine line in literature between women who merit praise and those who deserve disdain for unnatural ambition.<sup>227</sup> This fine line in part explains why scholars have seen negativity in the representation of Boudicca. It was entirely possible, however, for a female character to receive praise by surpassing what were considered the limits of the female sex during specific situations such as an impending political threat.

As an example from Roman legendary history, when the Roman general Coriolanus threatened Rome, women were sent to dissuade him.<sup>228</sup> His mother, Veturia, approached him, bringing his wife and children along, providing an example of women using their domestic positions to influence men. This is an instance where the divide between gender roles has been blurred, with no negative implications for the women who have entered the boundaries of the traditional male sphere. Coriolanus' mother is the only one who was able to convince Coriolanus to cease his plan of attack. In each of the sources (Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Plutarch) motherhood features prominently and is deployed symbolically. For example, in Livy (*AUC* 2.40) Veturia becomes the symbolic representation of all Romans; her pleas become the pleas of Rome. Thus in appealing to the deference he owes to his mother, she reminds him simultaneously of the

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<sup>225</sup> Dixon (2001) 16; Späth (2012) 442.

<sup>226</sup> See Richlin (1981) for how to approach representations of adultery in the sources.

<sup>227</sup> Späth (2012) 444; D'Ambra (2006) 143.

<sup>228</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 30. See Livy, *AUC* 2.39-40; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 8.49; Plutarch, *Cor.* 4.5-7.

deference he owes Rome. Plutarch's representation is far more elaborated and uses the image of the widowed mother I discussed earlier.<sup>229</sup> He develops more of a personality for Veturia that revolves around her devotion to her son and his upbringing, the responsibility of which was left to her after her husband's death. Veturia provides an instance in which the great importance and respect of mothers in Rome is salient.<sup>230</sup>

In Book 2 of the *Histories*, Tacitus praises a mother for allowing herself to be tortured rather than betray her son's hiding place to Roman soldiers.<sup>231</sup>

*Inritatus eo proelio Othonis miles vertit iras in municipium Albintimilium. quippe in acie nihil praedae, inopes agrestes et vilia arma; nec capi poterant, pernix genus et gnari locorum: sed calamitatibus insontium expleta avaritia. auxit invidiam praeclaro exemplo femina Ligus, quae filio abdito, cum simul pecuniam occultari milites credidissent eoque per cruciatus interrogarent ubi filium occuleret, uterum ostendens latere respondit, nec ullis deinde terroribus aut morte constantiam vocis egregiae mutavit.*

*Irritated by this conflict, the soldiers of Otho turned their rage on the town of Albintimilium. Indeed in the field there was nothing of plunder, the countrymen were poor and their arms worthless; nor could they be captured, for they were a persistent race, and had knowledge of the place: but their greed filled was filled by the ruin of an innocent people. A Ligurian woman increased the prejudice with her noble example, who, having concealed her son, when the soldiers, who believed that money had been hidden with him, questioned her through torture as to where she was hiding him, pointing to her womb she replied that he was hidden there, nor could any subsequent threats or even death change the firmness of her noble answer.*

This episode offers an example of the invasion of the private sphere by the public that I discussed in Chapter Two and provides a nice backdrop for the discussion of Boudicca. A

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<sup>229</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Coriolanus* 33-36. The elaboration is perhaps not so surprising given that the work is a biography.

<sup>230</sup> It is also notable that, similar to the situation with Boudicca, each of the authors has manipulated the story slightly, either by elaborating on or excluding details in order to emphasize the theme of the work in question.

<sup>231</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.13

foreign woman is mistreated but still stands up to her tormentors. She is a dutiful mother and this symbolism is emphasized by her response to the questioners that her son is hiding in her womb. Her defiance to the Roman soldiers is not criticized, a fact that is emphasized by the surrounding narrative. Tacitus instead criticizes the Roman army for sacking a defenceless city, disrespecting innocent women and children, and committing injustices against the people.<sup>232</sup> Tacitus very clearly uses this explicit and symbolic reference to motherhood to elicit sympathy from his audience.

Conversely, Tacitus also uses motherhood to emphasize a negative reading (*Hist.* 3.69). In the description of Senators and soldiers attacking the home of Sabinus, Tacitus tells us that women joined in the armed party. Here he inserts the story of Verulana Gratillia, who joins Sabinus and in doing so abandons her son. Tacitus describes this act in negative terms. Rather than joining the armed party out of loyalty and duty to her son, Verulana joins the opposite party due to her sheer eagerness to be in the fight. Verulana transgresses the boundaries of the male sphere but does not have the honourable intentions of a mother to support her actions, which is in sharp contrast to Veturia, the Ligurian woman, and, as shall be seen, Boudicca. Tacitus emphasizes Verulana's abandonment of her son, indicating that had she fought in order to support him instead, her actions would not have been so reprehensible.<sup>233</sup>

Another literary feature of motherhood is its deliberate exclusion from a narrative to further a specific image. This component is present in the representations of two particularly famous women, Fulvia and Cleopatra, who provide interesting examples since Fulvia was Roman and Cleopatra was foreign, dispelling the potential objection that this

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<sup>232</sup> Marshall (1984) 173-174.

<sup>233</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.69; Marshall (1984) 179.

type of imagery, or absence of it, was applied only to one or the other. The exclusion of motherhood from their representations in literature (and material culture) is striking given that we have seen motherhood used to both positive and negative ends. In the cases of Fulvia and Cleopatra the exclusion of motherhood enabled the authors to vilify the women.

Within Egypt, Cleopatra used images of motherhood to present herself to the Egyptians and consolidate her power. Cleopatra was mother to four children; one by Julius Caesar and three by Marc Antony. In the Roman sources, however, it is rarely, if at all, mentioned that Cleopatra was a mother.<sup>234</sup> The concept of motherhood was a powerful one and Octavian was careful not to evoke this attribute in his portrayal of Cleopatra. Instead, Octavian had Cleopatra masculinized and Antony feminized. By reversing the gender roles he removed Cleopatra from associations of motherhood. Octavian also had Caesarion's image removed from the statue of Cleopatra in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, a temple designed to remind the Romans of the descent of the Julian family from Venus. Not only did this effectively remove a rival but it also eliminated the child from a sculpture of a mother and child, thus diminishing the public image of Cleopatra as mother again. This is particularly interesting given the important role that children played elsewhere in Augustan imagery for the first time in public Roman art.<sup>235</sup> We see a recurrence of this theme in Augustan poetry. Horace,<sup>236</sup> Propertius,<sup>237</sup> and Vergil<sup>238</sup> all neglect to mention that Cleopatra is a mother, even in Horace, the most sympathetic of the

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<sup>234</sup> Jones (2012) 165, 172.

<sup>235</sup> See Zanker (1990).

<sup>236</sup> Horace, *Odes* 1.67.

<sup>237</sup> Propertius, *Elegies* 3.11.27-72.

<sup>238</sup> Vergil, *Aen.* 8.688.

three. As a part of his attempt to vilify Cleopatra in the eyes of the Roman audience Octavian eliminated the depiction of her as a mother.<sup>239</sup>

Similarly, Fulvia was a mother to two children, a fact that is rarely mentioned in the sources. She too is masculinized and Plutarch explains that she disregarded traditional women's work because she would rather rule over her husband.<sup>240</sup> Again here is an example of a woman who transgresses the boundaries of the male sphere for inappropriate reasons. Fulvia does not simply want to be involved in male action but desires to actually rule over men, taking on a dominant position that moved her across the spectrum towards masculinity.

In the attempt to vilify Fulvia and Cleopatra, both women were almost completely disassociated from their femininity, observable in the exclusion of motherhood from their representations. It becomes clear that motherhood played such a significant role in society that the inclusion of it potentially would have problematized the negative image that the authors attempted to portray. Including details of motherhood ran the risk of eliciting sympathy from an audience. In the absence of other negative indicators, such as Verulana's unnatural ambitions or negatively charged language,<sup>241</sup> motherhood aids in the presentation of a positive image. It is important to note as well that in the particular cases of Fulvia and Cleopatra, references to motherhood would remind the audience of their sons. It was necessary to avoid this because the sons could serve as a rallying point for any of the lingering supporters of Antony and reignite civil war. Thus the inclusion of motherhood was threatening in more than one way.

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<sup>239</sup> Jones (2012) 173-178.

<sup>240</sup> "She had no use for women's work like spinning or housekeeping and was not interested in presiding over a husband who was not in the public eye: rather, she wanted to rule a ruler and command a general." – Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 10.5-6

<sup>241</sup> See section II of this chapter (74).

In all of these cases it was not necessarily the involvement in the political or military arena that risked the women's reputations.<sup>242</sup> It was the ambition behind that involvement that determined the individual representation. Verulana was eager to fight and, blinded by that eagerness, she betrayed her son. Fulvia and Cleopatra did not take action to emulate men, but to rule over them. The Ligurian woman defied men and in that action became superior, but because it was on behalf of her son in her unflagging role as mother her dominance is not reprehensible. Veturia engaged in the male sphere, succeeding where men did not and thus achieved dominance over them as well, yet again it was in her role as a mother and thus she too was represented positively. Because of the various ways in which femininity is employed we cannot judge a woman based solely on her involvement in the male sphere.

### *Women In Tacitus' Annals*

The various ways in which femininity, specifically motherhood, was employed is a prominent theme broadly in Latin literature. The elements that I have discussed apply to Tacitus' *Annals* as well. Tacitus' narrative action regularly correlates with constructions of gender in that his assessment of individuals and events is based on whether or not they violate or conform to patterns of normative social behaviour.<sup>243</sup> For this reason, gendered readings of Tacitus can help to draw out significant elements of his narratives, in which we can see patterns of masculinity and femininity in the actions of characters, which in turn shape their representations. It is important to note that Tacitus' primary focus in writing the *Annals* is not elements of masculinity and femininity. His representations of

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<sup>242</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 147.

<sup>243</sup> Späth (2012) 435.

various men and women draw on existing gender constructions in Rome; he shapes his characters based on observable cultural concepts.<sup>244</sup> One of the most significant concepts to note for this discussion is that ideal female behaviour appears in Tacitus as the virtuous wife and a mother's support for her sons or daughters. He employs this standard, exemplified in Boudicca, alongside its opposite, the transgressive support of mothers exemplified in Livia and Agrippina the Younger.

## *II. Language and Juxtapositions*

I have argued that based on Roman gender constructions and various examples of mothers in literature one cannot classify Boudicca as 'bad' simply because she transgresses the boundaries of the traditional male sphere of military action. The spectrum of masculine and feminine types of action is far too broad to create a clear-cut line between what would have been considered acceptable and what would not.<sup>245</sup> This alone does not acquit Boudicca of negative associations, however. Since the descriptions of women who transgress these boundaries of the male sphere are often accompanied by negative language, there exists the assumption that all who do so must similarly be bad, even in the absence of negatively charged language.<sup>246</sup> In the previous section we saw that motherhood did not always indicate a positive representation, for example, the Verulana episode. Therefore, I will test the language that appears in Boudicca's representation against stereotypically 'bad' women in the *Annals* to show that in the absence of such language we cannot assume that Boudicca's military involvement alone

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<sup>244</sup> Späth (2012) 435, 451. For this reason I provided the relevant background at the beginning of the section.

<sup>245</sup> D'Ambra (2006) 15.

<sup>246</sup> For example, D'Ambra (2006) 161.

condemns her. While Tacitus may have represented ‘bad’ women inappropriately presiding in the male sphere, there are other red flags that usually have to do with the individual woman’s ambition. In the first half of this section I focus exclusively on the type of language used, not yet analyzing the actions and ambitions of each woman. I will show that the difference between the types of language used to describe the women in the narratives indicates that Tacitus has not presented the reader with a negative representation of Boudicca. Afterward I will apply a gendered reading to Boudicca to show the degree to which motherhood affects the narrative. Späth argues that we can take advantage of gendered readings to reveal Tacitean judgements and I will use this idea as a starting point.<sup>247</sup> By reading Tacitean narratives with gender in mind it becomes clear how Tacitus employs sexuality. A gendered reading of the narratives of Cartimandua, Messalina, Agrippina the Elder, Agrippina the Younger, Livia, and Epicharis reveals that the women’s sexualities are what drive the individual narratives. Aspects of their sexuality indicate their motives for their actions within the episodes, and Tacitus represents each individual woman’s sexuality in a slightly different way. Their gendered positions become symbolic representations for certain themes; sexuality becomes the avenue through which Tacitus is able to convey certain messages. These examples provide precedents for my argument that Boudicca’s gendered position as a mother is an integral component of her representation. More importantly, within the *Annals* Boudicca’s specific representation as a *foreign* mother acts in juxtaposition to Roman mothers in the text.

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<sup>247</sup> Späth (2012) 435.



*The Negativity Test: Women Behaving Badly*

I have referred several times throughout this chapter to ‘negatively charged language’. I use this phrase to refer to a group of specific words or combinations of words that are most often used to describe a woman whose behaviour is inappropriate and has earned the disapproval of the author. Some of these words are not necessarily negative by nature but become so when used in connection with women because they imply dominance over men.<sup>248</sup> For example: *imperium* (the right of authority), *auctoritas* (authority), *dominatio* (rule, mastery), *regina* (queen), *dux femina* (female leader), and *servitium* (slavery) all carry negative connotations when associated with women because authors frequently use these words to masculinize female antagonists.<sup>249</sup> Other words to be on the lookout for include: *ignominia* (shame, dishonor), and *saevitia* (cruelty). *Libido* and *cupido* both indicate a desire without rational control.<sup>250</sup> These are some of the most obvious examples, however the discussion certainly is not limited to only these.<sup>251</sup> Some words and phrases do not make sense out of context and as such I will discuss them as they appear.

Several of these words appear in the representation of Cartimandua, a queen of the Brigantes.<sup>252</sup> The description of Cartimandua is short, occupying only one chapter of the *Annals*:<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> See gender constructions in section I of this chapter (62).

<sup>249</sup> Santoro L’Hoir (1994) 5. She further argues that these associations characterize women as usurpers of masculine authority. While this is often true, I would argue that given the variety of representations we cannot use such blanket statements and expect them to apply seamlessly to all women in literature. Such blanket statements cause us to be predisposed to see negativity in the representation of women who exercise authority even despite the absence of negatively charged language.

<sup>250</sup> Rutland (1978) 15.

<sup>251</sup> For more negative words see Ginsburg (2006) 7.

<sup>252</sup> A tribe in Britain.

*...sed post captum Caratacum praecipuus scientia rei militaris Venutius, e Brigantum civitate, ut supra memoravi, fidusque diu et Romanis armis defensus, cum Cartimanduum reginam matrimonio teneret; mox orto discidio et statim bello etiam adversus nos hostilia induerat, sed primo tantum inter ipsos certabatur, callidisque Cartimandua artibus fratrem ac propinquos Venutii interceptit. inde accensi hostes, stimulante ignominia, ne feminae imperio subderentur, valida et lecta armis iuventus regnum eius invadunt. quod nobis praevisum, et missae auxilio cohortes acre proelium fecere, cuius initio ambiguo finis laetior fuit.*

*...but after the capture of Caratacus, the principal man in terms of knowledge of military affairs was Venutius, from the tribe of Brigantes, as I have already related, and he had long been faithful and defended by Roman arms, while he was married to the queen Cartimandua; soon, with disagreement arising and immediately war as well, he assumed a hostile attitude toward us, but at first, they fought only against each other and Cartimandua, by cunning stratagems, intercepted the brother and kin of Venutius. From this the enemy was inflamed, incited by disgrace, lest they be subjected to the authority of a woman, the strong and the youths chosen for war invaded her kingdom. This was foreseen by us, and with cohorts sent to her aid, they engaged in a sharp battle, which at first was doubtful but had a more successful end.*

Tacitus explicitly calls Cartimandua a queen, indicating that she rules the kingdom in her own right.<sup>254</sup> Her husband, Venutius, is not called a king and the aid he received from the Romans appears only to have been given because of his marriage to the queen, indicating that it was Cartimandua who negotiated the relationship with Rome. Tacitus expresses his disapproval at Cartimandua's use of 'cunning stratagems' to intercept Venutius' brother. Tacitus combines *imperio* with *feminae*, a negative enough combination on its own, but intensified with the association of the word *ignominia*. He makes it clear that Cartimandua's rule is shameful. Tacitus also implies that Cartimandua is the direct cause of the civil strife in the beginning, which then leads to a larger issue requiring Roman

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<sup>253</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.40.

<sup>254</sup> Keegan (2004) 100-103.

involvement. The language in this episode indicates that Tacitus criticizes Cartimandua's position as a ruler and her involvement as such in the political and military spheres.<sup>255</sup>

Valeria Messalina is another woman whom Tacitus vilifies in the *Annals*.

Messalina was descended from Octavia, Augustus' sister, and as the wife of the emperor Claudius, she bore two children, Britannicus and Claudia Octavia. Tacitus' account of the years AD 37-47 does not survive and thus the early years of Messalina's relationship with and subsequent marriage to Claudius remain unknown.<sup>256</sup> Some key facts are present: that Messalina played a prominent role in the destruction of 'enemies' of the state; that she committed adultery, quite publicly, with Gaius Silius whom she eventually married; and she committed suicide when that subsequent marriage was revealed. Negative language associated with Messalina abounds, but a selection of examples from the *Annals* should suffice:<sup>257</sup>

*...et matri Agrippinae miseratio augebatur ob saevitiam Messalinae, quae semper infesta et tunc commotior quo minus strueret crimina et accusatores novo et furori proximo amore distinebatur... Iam Messalina facilitate adulteriorum in fastidium versa ad incognitas libidines*

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<sup>255</sup> It is worth noting that Tacitus discusses Cartimandua in the *Histories* as well (*Hist.* 3.45). This representation is particularly abounding with pejoratives. Once again she is labeled as a queen (twice), and she employs deception in the capture of Caratacus. However, this description goes much further to condemn the queen. Tacitus takes on a moralizing tone by describing her as receiving as the reward for her treachery "wealth and an excess of favourable things" (*Tac. Hist.* 3.45). Where in the *Annals* he merely points out in passing the separation of Cartimandua and Venutius, in the *Histories* he explains that Cartimandua committed adultery, which he naturally describes as a "disgraceful thing". Not only has she committed adultery, but Tacitus also emphasizes that it was with someone of lower birth by pointing out her lover's profession as an armour-bearer. The next sentence contains four hostile words in rapid succession: *adultero*, *libido*, *reginae* and *saevitia*. She is not only a queen, she is an adulterous, cruel queen driven by a desire without rational control. While the episode is an excellent example of the use of negative language, it did not seem appropriate to use it in comparison with Boudicca given my argument that one work cannot be used to support the interpretation of another. The reasons for the differences in accounts would require a more in-depth analysis of the surrounding narrative in the *Histories*, an analysis that unfortunately I do not have the space to provide.

<sup>256</sup> Keegan (2005) 7.

<sup>257</sup> *Tac. Ann.* 11.12, and 11.26.

*profluebat... nomen tamen matrimonii concupivit ob magnitudinem infamiae cuius apud prodigos novissima voluptas est.*

*...and the pity felt for his mother Agrippina was increased by the cruelty of Messalina, who, always her enemy, and then more motivated than ever, heaped up crimes and new accusers and was only held back by a new and almost insane love*

*...Messalina, now having become sated with the ease of her adultery, was already rushing into unknown lusts...nevertheless she desired the name of matrimony for the sake of monstrous infamy, the ultimate pleasure for the reckless.*

Tacitus presents Messalina as wholly driven by her desires and he further vilifies her because those desires are described as ‘insane’ (*furor*).<sup>258</sup> Tacitus’ Messalina is cruel (*saevitiam*) and reckless (*prodigos*). Tacitus explains that Messalina was growing tired of simple adultery and later that she wants to marry someone so far beneath her station.<sup>259</sup> It is significant that Messalina does this, not in an attempt to gain more power like other imperial women, but for the sheer desire to do something scandalous. Her sexuality is not simply a means to an end, it is the end, and her very desire is what rules her.<sup>260</sup>

This type of language is not used to describe Boudicca. The first time Boudicca is mentioned is in 14.31,<sup>261</sup> in which she is not referred to as a queen, despite the fact that her husband is explicitly named ‘king’ and the word *regnum* is used three times.<sup>262</sup> It is in her battle speech at 14.35 that the lack of negative words is most noticeable. Although

<sup>258</sup> For the negative associations of *furor*, see Joseph (2012) esp. 73-79 and Hershkowitz (1998).

<sup>259</sup> Gaius Silius, a Roman soldier.

<sup>260</sup> Keegan (2005) argues that Cartimandua is juxtaposed to Messalina because of her adultery and cruelty, however, Cartimandua is not adulterous in the *Annals*, only in the *Histories* (see n. 58 above) and thus she cannot serve as the opposite to Messalina because this naturally assumes that Tacitus expected his readers to be familiar with his previous work and that the two works were complementary to each other.

<sup>261</sup> Please refer back to the translation in Chapter Two (29).

<sup>262</sup> *Rex Icenorum* (Tac. *Ann.* 14.31). *Regnum* appears twice in reference to Prasutagus’ will (Tac. *Ann.* 14.31), and once in Boudicca’s speech. (Tac. *Ann.* 14.35).

Boudicca points out that the Britons did allow female leadership Tacitus has her explicitly state that she is not going to war as one of glorious ancestry nor is she attempting to recover the kingdom for herself. The word *cupido* appears but it is attributed to the Romans, not Boudicca. Boudicca is not ambitious, she does not lust for power, and she is not cruel. In fact, only one phrase that denotes illegitimate power is present and this is the *dux femina*. It should be noted, however, that while imperial women are represented as usurpers of male power there are no males represented alongside Boudicca. Boudicca does not usurp the role as leader from a male because she is literally the leader. Tacitus does not present us with an alternative leader, aside from Boudicca's daughters who were meant to inherit the kingdom. In any case, Tacitus avoids potential negative associations with the sentence that appears after the *dux femina*. Boudicca states that she is merely fighting as *una e vulgo* ("one of the people"). Thus Tacitus has her downplay her noble status. Were Tacitus to have Boudicca call upon her status for support, the speech might have come across more as the complaint of a disgruntled, haughty foreign queen rather than an outraged woman and mother.

Tacitus repeatedly expresses his disapproval of female rule by attributing *imperium* and *auctoritas* to *feminae*. This is definitely true of Cartimandua's rule, but those words do not appear in relation to Boudicca in the *Annals*. The comparison of the language used to describe imperial women to that which describes Boudicca shows that Tacitus rarely shies away from criticism. When he wants to portray women in a negative light he does so with explicitly hostile terminology. Because such terminology is absent from the Boudiccan narrative, Tacitus' representation of Boudicca does not fit the typical category of a 'bad' woman.

*Juxtapositions and the Use of Sexuality*

The application of a gendered reading to flesh out select examples in the *Annals* shows how Tacitus used sexuality in the narrative. When we read the representations of women in the *Annals* in light of gender constructions, it becomes clear that aspects of sexuality are given as the motives for actions in the episodes and these provide symbolic representations of certain themes. In particular, the characters' sexualities provide a commentary on Tacitus' concern with the blurring of the public and private spheres that came with the establishment of the principate.<sup>263</sup> What is particularly noteworthy is that each of the representations achieves this in a slightly different way. It is for this reason that 'blanket' statements about women that classify women into either one category or the other are dangerous.<sup>264</sup> In their slightly different ways, the gendered positions are the avenue by which Tacitus transmits his messages. Generally, the representations comment on the current emperor. Thus Livia's position as a mother provides a commentary on Tiberius; Messalina's position as a wife and lover provides a commentary on Claudius; and Agrippina the Younger's position as a mother provides a commentary on Nero and the same in her position as the wife of Claudius. Aspects of each woman's sexuality drive the progression of the individual narrative. Their sexuality is employed frequently for disreputable means and usually for their own ambitions. Boudicca's position as a mother is the driving force of the narrative and is set up in direct opposition to these women because Tacitus makes it clear that Boudicca was acting on behalf of her daughters rather than for herself. By briefly looking at these women this will become more obvious.

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<sup>263</sup> See above, Chapter Two (24).

<sup>264</sup> See Baldwin (1972). Baldwin provides a terse list of the ways in which women are used in Tacitus, but applies numerous blanket statements in his categorization.

Livia's representation is designed to illustrate the reign of Tiberius. Her formidable position is due to her gendered position in the family, through which she is able to exercise control over the household.<sup>265</sup> In 1.4 Livia is described negatively in her role as a mother<sup>266</sup> and associated with *muliebris* and *inpotentia*, and in 1.3 as '*matris artibus*', or 'motherly machinations'.<sup>267</sup> Tacitus' Livia uses her position as a mother to achieve her goals. She is more concerned with her own ambitions than with helping Tiberius achieve his goals. That is to say, although she schemes to place Tiberius on the throne, it is more for her own ambitions than for those of Tiberius.<sup>268</sup> It is noteworthy that Tacitus does not represent Livia as taking an active role in public affairs. Livia works behind the scenes, minimizing her participation purely to the domestic realm. Livia has ambitions of power but does not go so far as to explicitly and publicly rule over men.

Agrippina the Elder is another good example. She enjoyed public visibility and not only was she ambitious but she also frequently put herself in a man's role. Shotter argues that Agrippina's reputation was saved only because of faithful devotion to her husband.<sup>269</sup> Before her husband Germanicus' death, Tacitus has Germanicus deliver a deathbed speech concerning Agrippina's duty. He advises her to fulfill her duty to her family by seeing to their sons' readiness to succeed Tiberius rather than promoting her own untraditional ambitions.<sup>270</sup> In other words, she must be a dutiful wife and mother and put that before her own desires for power. While Germanicus was alive, Agrippina

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<sup>265</sup> Milnor (2012) 460.

<sup>266</sup> Tac. Ann. 1.4.5. *accedere matrem muliebri inpotentia: serviendum feminae duobusque insuper adolescentibus, qui rem publicam interim premant, quandoque distrahant.*

<sup>267</sup> Tac. Ann. 1.3.3. *filius, collega imperii, consors tribuniciae potestatis adsumitur omnisque per exercitus ostentatur, non obscuris, ut antea, matris artibus, sed palam hortatu*

<sup>268</sup> Rutland (1978) 20.

<sup>269</sup> Shotter (2000) 345.

<sup>270</sup> Tac. Ann. 2.69

performed her duty as a proper and dutiful wife and mother, which directly reflects Tacitus' representation of Germanicus. Germanicus maintains control over his household, something that Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero were incapable of doing. Thus in this instance Agrippina's gendered position is utilized to highlight a man's good qualities. Once Germanicus is dead, however, Tacitus no longer needs a controlled Agrippina, and instead represents her as now focused on her own ambitions.

Messalina is a much more interesting example. Tacitus employs Messalina's sexuality in the narrative to create a 'weak' Claudius.<sup>271</sup> Where Claudius is a passive character throughout the *Annals*, Messalina takes decisive action.<sup>272</sup> Sexual misconduct, specifically adultery, was frequently employed in political invective.<sup>273</sup> Tacitus represents Messalina as adulterous and Claudius as manipulated. Messalina is driven by a frequently violent desire that emasculates the men she unleashes it on.<sup>274</sup> Her unrestrained sexuality brings chaos to the household and social hierarchy in Rome. It is Tacitus' representation of Messalina provides a critical commentary on Claudius' inability to exercise properly his imperial authority.<sup>275</sup> Tacitus takes advantage of the familial relationship between Messalina and Claudius to show that Claudius' inability to control his own household directly reflects his inability to control the state. Thus Tacitus does not blame Messalina for Claudius' failings, but uses her and her sexuality to drive the narrative. It is noteworthy that Messalina does not actually rule over the men in the narrative, but rather she persuades men to act on her behalf. This symbolically represents the emasculation of

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<sup>271</sup> Joshel (1997) 227. Joshel explains that we cannot separate Tacitus' representation of Messalina from the 'facts' in the narrative because her sexuality is what drives the progression, and thus the political events are tied with the private.

<sup>272</sup> Joshel (1997) 225.

<sup>273</sup> Joshel (1997) 227.

<sup>274</sup> Refer to *The Negativity Test* above (76).

<sup>275</sup> Joshel (1997) 236.



men as well as it comments on the imperial system that has been allowed to silence good men.<sup>276</sup> Messalina's representation is reminiscent of Livia's, in so far as she does not assume a direct role in political matters, but Messalina's involvement is still more public.

Tacitus represents Agrippina the Younger as ambitious and criticizes her for acting as a partner in imperial authority. She desires power and her ambition is almost masculine in nature.<sup>277</sup> Tacitus' description of the events leading up to the marriage between Agrippina and Claudius show that her only motivation for the marriage was her ambition for power. She often used her sexuality in order to achieve her political goals and Tacitus frequently attributes *dominatio* to her.<sup>278</sup> For example, in *Annals* 12.7 he writes that, "there was nothing shameful at home, unless it served the ends of tyrannical rule".<sup>279</sup> In *Annals* 12.56 Tacitus provides an example of Agrippina's desire to rule by describing her attempt to preside with Claudius.<sup>280</sup>

*ipse insigni paludamento neque procul Agrippina chlamyde aurata  
praesedere.*

*He [Claudius], wearing a distinguished military cloak and not far from  
him Agrippina seated with a golden cloak, presided.*

The *chlamyde aurata* is a type of military cloak often equated with the *paludamentum* that Claudius is described as wearing, and as such, is not a cloak that women frequently wear.<sup>281</sup> That Agrippina would choose to wear one indicates, for Tacitus, that she is dressing as a military queen and intends to preside over the ceremony as a co-ruler. The account of the ceremony for a provincial embassy in 54 in *Annals* 13.5 provides another

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<sup>276</sup> Joshel (1997) 233, 236.

<sup>277</sup> Keegan (2005) 108; Rutland (1978) 26-27.

<sup>278</sup> Ginsburg (2006) 18.

<sup>279</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.7: *nihil domi impudicum, nisi dominatio expediret.*

<sup>280</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 12.56

<sup>281</sup> Kaplan (1979) 413-414.

example of how Tacitus viewed Agrippina. Tacitus describes a potentially dangerous situation in which Agrippina attempted to present herself as a co-ruler. In moral terms Tacitus describes how Seneca's intervention prevented Agrippina from being perceived by the foreign envoys in such a position:<sup>282</sup>

*quin et legatis Armeniorum causam gentis apud Neronem orantibus escendere suggestum imperatoris et praesidere simul parabat, nisi ceteris pavore defixis Seneca admonuisset, venienti matri occurrere. ita specie pietatis obviam itum dedecori.*

*When the ambassadors of Armenia were speaking the cause of their nation before Nero, she was preparing to mount the platform of the emperor and to preside with him; but Seneca, when everyone else was fixed with alarm, motioned for him to meet his mother as she approached. Thus, by the appearance of duty, disgrace was prevented.*

These situations in which Tacitus describes Agrippina's involvement in the political sphere represent the near-complete dissolution of the divide between private and public. The imperial women no longer meddle with political affairs behind the scenes; their involvement is open and on display to the public.

In the cases of each of the imperial women Tacitus explicitly describes the ulterior motives he attributes to their actions. Livia used her gendered position as a mother to promote Tiberius' interests but in reality she sought to fulfill her own ambitions. Agrippina the Elder put her ambition to be in a man's position before her duty to her children, which is particularly damning considering the responsibility of widows for their fatherless children. While Germanicus was alive Tacitus represents Agrippina the Elder's ambitions as controlled and restrained because of her duty to her husband. In this way Tacitus is able to comment on Germanicus' ability to control his household, and thus his gendered position as a proper man, which is in direct contrast to Tiberius,

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<sup>282</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.5; Kaplan (1979) 413.

Claudius, and Nero. Messalina used her sexuality to achieve her own desires, which she puts above all else, including her duty to her husband Claudius. Agrippina the Younger used her sexuality to gain power, satisfying only her own ambitions with little regard for Claudius, and later, little regard for her son Nero. In order to satisfy their own ambitions, these women neglect their traditional duties to their families. It is this trait that categorizes them as 'bad' women, not simply their involvement in the public sphere. They used their gendered positions as wives and mothers to achieve their goals when their true aim should have been the interests of their husbands and children. Tacitus uses these women as symbolic representations of 'bad' empire.<sup>283</sup> For Tacitus, these women exist as warnings to his audience of the potential dangers that came with the domestication of the imperial state. By tying the state inextricably with one household, it was possible for these women to gain power, which Tacitus represents in various degrees. By the time Nero is in power, the involvement by imperial women is more public than ever. Thus the breakdown between the private and public spheres is almost fully realized. It is at the time of this breakdown that Tacitus inserts his narrative of Boudicca, who, when considered in light of this dissolution of the divide, is represented as a good mother, set up in juxtaposition to the imperial women.

In his account of the Pisonian conspiracy, Tacitus inserts the story of Epicharis, a freedwoman and prostitute who provides the only example of a noble character in the account of the conspiracy.<sup>284</sup> When the traitors are revealed, Epicharis is subjected to torture to reveal information about the conspiracy. Rather than succumb and confess like the male conspirators (free-born, equestrian, and senatorial), Epicharis withstands the

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. Joshel (1997) 244.

<sup>284</sup> Pagán (2000) 365. See Tac. *Ann.* 15.57.

torture and commits suicide.<sup>285</sup> Her gender-specific position in the narrative provides a contrast to the negative representation of the conspirators. Despite the fact that she is a former slave and a woman, Tacitus compares Epicharis' honourable conduct with the dishonourable behaviour of the men. As a former slave Epicharis does not belong among honorable freeborn Roman women, who typically are characterized by chaste modesty.<sup>286</sup> Instead, Tacitus praises Epicharis for acting in an honourable male fashion. She is presented as superior to men in the narrative but avoids any negative associations that might have accompanied that representation. It is Epicharis' gendered position along with her status that drives home the point. Similarly, it is Boudicca's gendered position that provides the avenue for Tacitus to transmit his message.

Many women in Roman literature celebrated for their great qualities were widowed. Motherhood enhanced a woman's status and her responsibility as a sole parent upon the death of her husband was part of what influenced the status to which the mother was held. The widowed mother became a guardian of traditional virtue and this element of maternal protection was stronger with the daughter than the son. Mothers could be counted on to act in the daughter's interest in an emergency. This characterization applies to Boudicca in the *Annals* because Tacitus informs us of her husband and daughters. Boudicca was widowed and thus the sole responsibility of caring for their children fell to her. The rape of her daughters can certainly be described as an emergency and in Roman literature the proper reaction to such an event was to incite political

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<sup>285</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.57.1-2. Tacitus claims that the men merely looked at the torture devices before confessing. Epicharis endured torture for one day and when she was dragged back the following day she, "inserted her neck in the knot of the brassiere taken from her breast, tied like a noose on the arch of the chair and straining with the weight of her body she let go the spare life still left in her." Tacitus also explains that Epicharis was put in a chair because her dislocated limbs prevented her from standing.

<sup>286</sup> Späth (2012) 448.

change.<sup>287</sup> Boudicca does not involve herself in the public sphere because of her own ambitions, but because the public sphere has already invaded the private. In Boudicca's world the divide between public and private was broken down when she was whipped and her daughters were raped on account of Roman maladministration following her husband's death. Boudicca does not transgress the boundaries of the traditional male sphere because those boundaries had already been eradicated, in a sense they are non-existent.

Tacitus reminds his audience of Boudicca's gendered position as wife and mother throughout her speech. Although he has represented her as actively involved in the traditional male sphere, Boudicca maintains her femininity. The potential negative connotations of the *dux femina* are counteracted by the references to Boudicca's femininity that surround the phrase. Immediately before Tacitus reminds the reader of Boudicca's position as a mother by inserting references to her daughters. Thus any inclination one might feel toward perceiving Boudicca's representation as negative is quickly dispelled with these reminders of Boudicca's position as a mother.

The narrative of Boudicca's rebellion is set up both to reflect Nero's reign and to sit in juxtaposition to the imperial women. Given the context of the narrative, it becomes clear that Tacitus is exploring the effects of the dissolution of the divide between public and private. Through Boudicca, Tacitus presents a political and personal level. On the political level the Britons are fighting for their country while Rome fights for greed and luxury. On the personal level, Boudicca involves herself in the military arena for her daughters and the people, while women in Rome do so for their own power.

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<sup>287</sup> See section III below (89).

### *III. Daughters, Rape, and Libertas*

It may seem obvious, but by representing Boudicca as a mother in the *Annals* Tacitus allows for the inclusion of daughters. It is by this inclusion that Tacitus presents the theme of *libertas* in the narrative. Without the element of motherhood, the commentary on this theme would not have been strong.<sup>288</sup> The presence and rape of the daughters in the narrative significantly enhances Tacitus' juxtaposition of the rebellion with the political situation in Rome under Nero. The rebellion is the result of the Britons' desire for *libertas*, an escape from their *servitium* to Rome, or at least Roman maladministration. Tacitus seems to be eliciting sympathy for the Iceni from his audience by describing in detail the outrages committed against the natives.<sup>289</sup>

Boudicca's speech contains most of the motifs that contribute to this theme. Her focus on the rape of her daughters also provides an interesting link to a long-standing literary tradition. This is not the first time a sexual transgression has been used as the catalyst for a revolt. In Roman historiography, rape often serves as an event that justifies an uprising.<sup>290</sup> Although Adler touches on this point, it is necessary for this theme to be discussed in greater detail.

There are several features of this speech that clearly link this narrative to this broader theme within both the Roman and the Greek literary tradition: the mistreatment of Boudicca and the rape of her daughters, the presence of Boudicca's daughters during her speech, and most importantly, the very last clause, "the men may live and be slaves".<sup>291</sup> Santoro L'Hoir argues that this sentence is Boudicca's way of 'bullying' the tribes into

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<sup>288</sup> See above, Chapter Two and the overview of the *Agricola* for the Britons' complaints and how they fail to elicit sympathy from the reader (26).

<sup>289</sup> Adler (2011) 120-121.

<sup>290</sup> Adler (2011) 124.

<sup>291</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.35. "*viverent viri et servirent*"

fighting.<sup>292</sup> She bases this on Webster's interpretation that Boudicca is "taunting the men to do what she a mere woman was prepared to do" and that most translations miss this meaning.<sup>293</sup> While I agree that the words are employed to shame the men into action, I believe that both have missed the fact that there is a long-standing tradition of sentiments that evoke shame from men. Tacitus aligns Boudicca with two of the most famous and celebrated women in Roman history, Lucretia and Verginia, and more specifically, with a connection to the Roman Republic, all of which fit into a larger theme in Tacitus. Three examples should serve as appropriate comparisons for Boudicca's speech.

The first example is one of the most famous of Roman legends, the rape of Lucretia. Sextus Tarquinius' rape of Lucretia and her subsequent suicide incite the Roman people into rebellion, culminating in the expulsion of the 'foreign' monarchy. Just before her suicide, Lucretia delivers a speech to her male family members:<sup>294</sup>

*Sed date dexteras fidemque haud impune adultero fore. Sex. est Tarquinius qui hostis pro hospite priore nocte vi armatus mihi sibique, si vos viri estis, pestiferum hinc abstulit gaudium.*

*But give me your right hands and promise that the adulterer shall not be unpunished. Sextus Tarquinius is the man who, as enemy [in the disguise] of a guest, in the previous night with arms has taken away by force the joy destructive to me and, if you are men, himself.*

Later at AUC 1.59 Lucretia's family displays her body to the public and Brutus calls upon the people of Rome to take up arms against the tyrant "as was fitting of men and as was fitting of Romans".<sup>295</sup>

The next example does not involve rape, but the threat of future rape. In Book 3 of

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<sup>292</sup> Santoro L'Hoir (1994) 9.

<sup>293</sup> Webster (1978) 99-100.

<sup>294</sup> Livy AUC 1.58.

<sup>295</sup> ...quod viros, quod Romanos deceret, Livy AUC 1.59.

the *AUC* Livy tells the story of Verginia and the overthrow of the *decemviri*. The narrative covers a man's evil desire, the death of an innocent and virtuous woman, and the political revolution that comes as a result of that death. In this story Appius Claudius abuses his power and claims that a woman he desired was one of his slaves and that her father had stolen her and passed her off as his daughter. In the end the corrupt court rules in favour of his client and declares Verginia a slave. Her father kills her in order to prevent the shame that would come from being a slave and her fiancée displays her body to the crowd, leading to a revolt. In a speech to the crowd, Verginia's father calls upon the men of Rome and says that no man with a sword would endure the judgement Appius made in the case.<sup>296</sup>

The third is a Greek example, the story of Xenocrite of Cumae in Plutarch's *On the Bravery of Women*.<sup>297</sup> Plutarch, a contemporary of Tacitus, tells the story of how a certain Aristodemus set himself up as tyrant and apparently fell in love with Xenocrite, the daughter of a man he had sent into exile. According to Plutarch, Aristodemus convinced himself that Xenocrite was happy with him but in reality he was violating her honour because they were not married and she was with him unwillingly. He describes a scene where Aristodemus was walking down the street and a woman stepped well out of his way and covered her face. Some of the men laughed at her and asked her why she would bother to do so in front of the tyrant when she would not in front of other men. She replied that it was because Aristodemus was the only real man in the city. When Xenocrite heard of this, she was inspired to urge the men to rebel and rediscover their freedom.

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<sup>296</sup> See Livy *AUC* 3.44-48.

<sup>297</sup> Plutarch, *On the Bravery of Women*, 26.



These stories, along with the Boudicca narrative, are enticingly similar. Each story involves a sexual transgression, or at least the threat of a sexual transgression. All four also involve abuse of power and the fight for lost *libertas*. The sexual transgressions are used to justify the rebellion against the unjust power. In three of the stories the victims of sexual transgression are put on display to incite public outrage. In the Lucretia and Verginia narratives it is the bodies that are put on display to elicit an emotional response. Although Boudicca's daughters are not dead, it is still significant that they are present for Boudicca's speech about the outrages committed by the Romans. Tacitus' emphasis on their presence, "Boudicca, mounted on her chariot with her daughters before her..." is not an accident. The public displays of these victims serve as physical reminders to the people of the injustice of the actions of the authority.<sup>298</sup> It is also interesting to note that once these women have played their role in inspiring political action, they are promptly forgotten. Lucretia, Verginia, Xenocrite and Boudicca's daughters are not mentioned in their respective narratives after they served their purpose.<sup>299</sup>

The inclusion of rape serves multiple purposes. In the *Agricola*, the Britons as a whole complained about the rape of women and general mistreatment of the British people. In the *Annals* this complaint becomes personalized. What comes across as a stock example of a native complaint in the *Agricola*<sup>300</sup> is humanized in the *Annals*. Those affected by the misadministration of the province become real, individual people. Because Tacitus has represented Boudicca with idealized Roman female traits, the Roman readers would consider the rape with regard to their own cultural concerns. Skinner explains that

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<sup>298</sup> Feldherr (1998) 196. For the tyrant as a stock character in Tacitus and Livy, see Dunkle (1971).

<sup>299</sup> Joshel (1992) 117.

<sup>300</sup> Compare the complaints of the Britons in the *Agricola* to Calpurnius' speech, Tac. *Agr.* 29-32.

the preservation of the corporeal integrity for men of elite status was the defining mark of his social identity. This integrity was projected onto his family and represented in a daughter's chastity and purity.<sup>301</sup> The purity of a woman's body also directly reflected the purity, safety, or political autonomy of a group.<sup>302</sup> Thus the rape of Boudicca's daughters serves as a highly personalized metaphor for the loss of independence felt by the Britons under Roman administration. Shürenburg argues that Boudicca is acting in her own interests because she specifically refers to the maltreatment of herself and her daughters and uses her influence to incite a rebellion based on those reasons.<sup>303</sup> This does not appear to be the intention in mentioning the rape. Boudicca's loss of liberty is symbolic for the Britons' loss of liberty; she is one humanized example of all of the atrocities committed. The character's femaleness is used to highlight Roman male aggression.<sup>304</sup> This directly reflects Tacitus' concern for the loss of freedom under Nero's tyrannical rule in Rome.<sup>305</sup> Tacitus expresses his concern about the abuse of imperial authority through this representation of Boudicca and her daughters. Nero's abuse of power allowed his personal life to permeate his public life, which had disastrous effects on Rome and the people. On a grander scale, the invasion of Boudicca's home represents the effects of the dissolution of the divide between public and private and the misadministration of imperial authority.

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<sup>301</sup> Skinner (1997) 5 compares the importance of a daughter's chastity for family glory to the honour earned by a son's military or civic successes.

<sup>302</sup> Dixon (2001) 47.

<sup>303</sup> Shürenburg (1975) 77.

<sup>304</sup> Macdonald (1988) 46

<sup>305</sup> Keegan (2005) 2.

#### ***IV: Boudicca the Hybrid***

Scholars have noted that by representing Boudicca with Roman qualities, Tacitus sought to elicit sympathy from his audience.<sup>306</sup> In light of the discussion about themes in Tacitus' *Annals*, this idea can be taken further. Tacitus, I suggest, used the Boudicca narrative to provide another avenue by which to convey his overall message, that is, freedom from the servility that sometimes accompanied rule by an emperor in a domesticated state. Boudicca's motherhood not only elicited sympathy from the audience but also allowed Tacitus' message to be received by his audience.

Augoustakis argued that Silius Italicus' representation of foreign women in the *Punica* as both Roman and 'other' and as mothers allowed for the women to convey a particular message to a Roman audience that would not have worked had they simply been represented as foreign.<sup>307</sup> We can see a similar effect in the representation of Boudicca. In Tacitus's representation in the *Annals*, Boudicca becomes a slightly idealized Roman matron.<sup>308</sup> Tacitus contrasts Roman society and its failings with what he sees as the uncorrupted morals of the barbarians, between self and the externalized other.<sup>309</sup> Because he considers the Britons to be uncorrupted he sees in them the persistence of traditional Roman virtues and superimposes these virtues on the Britons in his representation. Montserrat explains that it is crucial to remember that foreign "queens" like Boudicca were able to engage in military leadership at the same time as being credited with traditional Roman male values.<sup>310</sup> Like Epicharis, Boudicca's particular

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<sup>306</sup> Adler (2011) 136; Braund (1996) 145; Crawford (2002) 26.

<sup>307</sup> Augoustakis (2010).

<sup>308</sup> Adler (2011) 124, 127.

<sup>309</sup> Joshel (1997) 240.

<sup>310</sup> Montserrat (2000) 165. Although I take issue with the use of the word 'queen' to describe Boudicca.

position allows her to exhibit male virtues without the negative associations that often accompanied them when exhibited by elite Roman women.<sup>311</sup> In the Boudicca narrative, Roman values are all superimposed onto Boudicca, causing the erasure of cultural differences.<sup>312</sup> Tacitus deactivates the other vs. same polarity by having Boudicca exhibit Roman qualities in her position as a barbarian.<sup>313</sup> She becomes an unclassified ‘other’: both Roman and non-Roman, civilized figure and barbarian, Roman *matrona* and *dux femina*, insider and outsider. “Barbarian (m)otherhood”, as Augoustakis terms it, has become assimilated to the sameness of the Roman ideal.<sup>314</sup> For this reason it is significant that the element of motherhood appears only in this version of the rebellion in the *Annals*. Otherwise, the message would have appeared simply as a stock example of barbarian resistance. Boudicca is the enemy and we would expect her to be perceived by the Roman reader as anti-Roman. Boudicca’s values should not be so closely aligned with the values of an upright Roman matron, and yet the narrative confirms that they were.<sup>315</sup> That Tacitus has blended these aspects in his characterization of Boudicca is clear, but what is not clear is the reason he did so. How, then, are we supposed to read Boudicca’s representation?

This mixture of foreignness and Roman values effectively dissociates Boudicca from any criticisms Tacitus makes concerning the Britons as a whole in the narrative.<sup>316</sup> This is emphasized by Boudicca’s absence from the narrative when Tacitus discusses the

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<sup>311</sup> See section II of this chapter above (74).

<sup>312</sup> Cf. Dräger (1995). Dräger argues that Jason’s mother in Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautika* is similarly transformed into a Roman matron.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Augoustakis (2010) 197 and Konstan (2002). Konstan argues for a similar deactivation between Greco-Roman and barbarian in Strabo’s representation of Pythodoris.

<sup>314</sup> Augoustakis (2010) 236.

<sup>315</sup> Augoustakis (2008) 64 argues for a similar defied expectation in the representation of Imilce in Silius’ *Punica*.

<sup>316</sup> Augoustakis (2008).

movements and actions of the Britannic forces. In light of the imperial women, Boudicca's motherhood is what prevents her from being catalogued alongside 'bad' women who transgress the boundaries of the male sphere. The inclusion of male aggression and rape that invades the home is the final dissolution between public and private. Therefore Boudicca's involvement in the military sphere is not a transgression. This breakdown of the divide is meant to serve as a lesson to Roman readers about the abuse of imperial authority and the inability to control the female members of the imperial family. The simultaneous representation as a mother and a foreigner makes Boudicca more palatable to a Roman audience. By using a foreign woman Tacitus avoids the problems that would have come from representing a Roman women as involved in the male sphere. Tacitus allows for the importation of her representation to serve as a lesson for the readers in Rome.<sup>317</sup>

Braund makes much of the fact that Boudicca's rebellion was ultimately futile and did not accomplish any significant changes in the Roman administration of Britain.<sup>318</sup> He concludes with the question of why Tacitus would have bothered to provide a detailed account of a rebellion that did not present a significant threat to Rome. However, choosing to put the message of freedom in the mouth of someone who was not a significant threat is in keeping with a recurrent theme in Tacitus. Pagán argues that Tacitus chose his messengers of freedom carefully and only portrays characters that exhibit this message with dignity.<sup>319</sup> Tacitus provides narratives in which the reader sides with the character that expresses an honourable message and stands up for the

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<sup>317</sup> Joshel (1997) 241.

<sup>318</sup> Braund (1996) 139.

<sup>319</sup> Pagán (2000) 358.

stereotypically just virtue of *libertas*.<sup>320</sup> Pagán makes this argument by analyzing the representations of the German Arminius, the prostitute Epicharis, and the historian Cremutius Cordus. These three characters were all excluded from the centre of power in Rome and thus did not present a significant threat to Roman authority.<sup>321</sup> In Chapter Two I discussed Tacitus' concept of *libertas* and that he did not advocate opposition to the institution of the principate itself but to those who wielded power improperly. Tacitus expressed disapproval for those who passively allowed degenerate emperors to rule.<sup>322</sup> The rebellion of Boudicca appears during the reign of Nero not to suggest that the Romans should take up arms to rebel against Nero but to show that passive servility to misadministration had dangerous consequences, emphasized by the invasion of the private world by the public. Tacitus uses the example of Boudicca alongside other voices of freedom to advise for a moderate ground between rebellion and servility.<sup>323</sup>

It is noteworthy that two of the characters Pagán mentions, Epicharis and Cremutius Cordus, resolve to commit suicide in the end of their narratives. Boudicca, too, commits suicide, after which point the narrative of the rebellion soon ends. Tacitus has used Boudicca to present his specific message concerning *libertas* and the dangers of the imperial household, but once that message has been conveyed he no longer has a need for Boudicca's character. Conveniently, she dies and for the time being there is no continuation of the British threat. Tacitus may be said to admire and sympathize with Boudicca's cause but does not recommend a revolution. Braund's question about why Tacitus chose to provide a detailed narrative for an unsuccessful rebellion can be

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<sup>320</sup> Pagán (2000) 294.

<sup>321</sup> Pagán (2000) 295.

<sup>322</sup> Wirszubski (1950) 164.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Pagán (2000) 367.

answered in light of Tacitus' views on freedom. By using characters who express dramatic opposition, Tacitus is able to speak against a system in which he recognizes the opportunity for the exploitation of authority, but which he ultimately supports.<sup>324</sup>

Boudicca is simply another means by which Tacitus is able to promote his ideas and he is able to achieve this by representing Boudicca with Roman attributes.

### ***Conclusions***

It is clear that motherhood formed a significant part of Boudicca's representation in the *Annals* and affected the progression of the narrative at various levels. By analyzing Boudicca's position as wife and mother against the backdrop of Roman conceptions of gender roles in society, it becomes evident that Tacitus intended a specific reception of the Boudicca narrative. Yet because of Boudicca's involvement in military affairs there exists a predisposition to view her representation as negative. By examining closely the language which describes Boudicca against that of stereotypically negative representations in the *Annals*, I have shown that there is no evidence to support a negative reading of Boudicca's representation.

I showed how Tacitus used gendered positions of other women for the progression of the individual narratives. Tacitus frequently used women's positions as wives and mothers to comment on male figures in the narrative and Boudicca is no exception. Tacitus juxtaposed the representation of Boudicca as a mother to the representations of other mothers in the *Annals* to show the danger of ambitious women. He was also symbolically representing the failings of the contemporaneous emperor Nero, who was incapable of maintaining the distinction between public and private.

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<sup>324</sup> Pagán (2000) 368.

By presenting Boudicca as a mother in the *Annals* Tacitus allowed for the inclusion of daughters in the narrative. This familial representation and the outrages committed against them were designed to elicit sympathy and humanized a stock example of barbarian oppression and rebellion. The rapes served as a metaphor for the loss of independence felt by Britons under Roman administration. This representation also aligned Boudicca with famous honourable women in Roman legend, which caused the Roman audience to further associate Boudicca with Roman values.

As part Roman *matrona* and part barbarian, Boudicca's representation ensured that Tacitus' political messages could be conveyed. Had Tacitus not 'romanized' Boudicca, he would have run the risk of his political messages failing to transmit because his readers would dismiss an obviously barbaric woman.<sup>325</sup> Tacitus's message of freedom appears in the mouth of a respectable woman who was not a significant threat to Rome, thus reinforcing the positive reception of Boudicca and the themes she represented.

The representation of Boudicca as a mother affected multiple aspects of the narrative in the *Annals*. What might seem to be a small detail actually provides the means by which Tacitus is able to comment on the reign of Nero and the imperial women, as well as the opportunity to humanize a previously impersonal account.<sup>326</sup> Motherhood forms the foundation of the entire narrative and significantly enhances the representation of Boudicca.

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<sup>325</sup> Cf. Augoustakis (2008).

<sup>326</sup> I.e. the Boudicca narrative in the *Agricola*.



## **Chapter 4:** **Conclusion**

The representation of Boudicca in the *Annals* is a compelling one. As the most sympathetic of the three extant Boudicca narratives, it is unsurprising that it became the most accepted version by early modern authors. The seemingly hostile representation of Boudicca in Dio presented English authors with the moral dilemma of how to interpret their origins. Still unprepared to confront the glaring discrepancy between the sources, modern authors have simply discredited and dismissed them and proceeded to analyze a medium which did not present the biases inherent to Roman authors, that is, archaeology. Archaeological analyses of Roman Britain have indeed provided either confirmation or extension of what can be found in the sources and has elucidated details of the rebellion itself.<sup>327</sup> However, while this search to provide solid ‘facts’ has turned up much information about the rebellion itself, it has done little to reveal Boudicca. In fact, the ancient sources are our only window by which we can glimpse the historical Boudicca. Although the sources clearly exhibit biases in the representations of Boudicca and the Britons, they are nevertheless deserving of analytical focus. Boudicca’s representation may tell us little about the historical woman but she can tell us about the work in which the representation was produced.

Another common feature of scholarship on Boudicca has been to extract the three narratives to provide a clear and cohesive whole, thus separating the narratives from the work in which they were produced. This process necessarily glosses over the discrepancies and oddities in the narratives, during which we lose clues to potential

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<sup>327</sup> Webster (1978); Hingley and Unwin (2005).

juxtapositions and authorial aims.

In either case, whether discrediting or compiling the narratives, the result is the same. Boudicca's rebellion has become something extraordinary, a rare example of virtue and the courage to take a stand against an oppressive regime. When we resituate the narratives back within their sources, however, the example of Boudicca, while certainly interesting, in fact displays stereotypical literary tropes that somewhat diminish the elements that English authors laud as extraordinary.<sup>328</sup> This is not a reason for the outright dismissal of the accounts but rather a reason for extensive study with a directed focus on each account. By means of the idealization of Boudicca and the subsequent separation of the narratives from the sources, one cannot apply scholarship on the individual author. This is an endeavor that might help explain oddities in the narrative that have cropped up due to their divorce from the surrounding text. For this reason I offered the present study of the representation of Boudicca in the *Annals*.

Once one considers the relevant Tacitean scholarship to the Boudicca narrative, significant aspects of her representation are revealed. The multiple examples of the deliberate manipulation of events and characters in the *Annals* provide a precedent for analyzing Boudicca in the same way. Tacitus frequently applied literary techniques to produce more dramatic representations in order to support the overarching themes of his work. In fact, it is Tacitus' overarching themes that influence the representation of most of the events and characters in the work as a whole. Therefore we should not be surprised to see these features in the representation of Boudicca. While it is possible to be

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<sup>328</sup> See Fry's quote at the beginning of Chapter One. And Aldhouse-Green (2006) xv, "This book is not simply about a person in history, but about the earliest freedom movement recorded from Britain, in AD 60/1. It is therefore a book about Britannia, about British identity and independence, about resistance to oppressive colonialism, and about the attempt, by a tiny minority community in eastern England, to challenge the military might of the Roman Empire."

disconcerted at the potentiality for an exaggerated representation of Boudicca, it is beneficial to turn instead to a discussion concerning why Tacitus might have chosen to do so. The narrative account of each event in the *Annals* was deliberately selected and very carefully designed. Therefore, the details provided in Boudicca's representation should be analyzed more fully.

When we consider the Boudicca narrative in light of these fundamental aspects of Tacitus' authorial aims, the element of motherhood emerges as a key distinction in Boudicca's representation that is of great significance to the present argument. The gendered positions of women in the *Annals* drove the progression of the narratives and commented on the dangers inherent in an imperial system that was inextricably linked to one household. By representing Boudicca as a mother as one of the respites from the descriptions of court intrigues, Tacitus used Boudicca to provide a commentary on the contemporaneous reign of Nero. This message would have been ignored had it come from the mouth of a wholly uncivilized 'other' but Tacitus' Boudicca exists as a suitable medium to convey his political messages. Tacitus achieves this by representing Boudicca as a wife and mother.

Tacitus created a complex character who was able to perform a variety of functions. She and her daughters provide a humanized version of a literary trope and elicit sympathy from their audience. Tacitus attributes both Roman and barbarian characteristics to Boudicca, disassociating her from the foreign periphery and yet not to the extent that she becomes entirely Roman and thus subject to the more stringent criteria by which Roman women were measured. She holds the somewhat unique position as insider and outsider, Roman and non-Roman, in order to promote very specific ideals. A

potentially dangerous message is safely located in the person of Boudicca, an honourable Roman matron and a woman who overall did not present a significant threat to Rome.

If we return to the problem that early modern English authors faced in reconciling a maternal figure with a strategic leader, we see now that Tacitus reconciled the issue for us. Boudicca need not exist as one or the other; instead she is somewhat like a hybrid figure. As a widow, Boudicca herself becomes atypical of other women and thus it is true that she fights as one of the people. Yet Tacitus will not allow us to separate her completely from her femininity. She engages in military affairs as an honourable mother and defends the traditional female virtues of virginity and chastity. Tacitus' Boudicca occupies the position of 'other' and mother, the military and the private sphere, simultaneously while still avoiding the negative associations that potentially accompanied each. To separate the Boudicca narrative from the *Annals*, or to discredit it, is to do a great disservice to Tacitus and the complexity with which he represented the figure of Boudicca.

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